BLUE BOOK

An Illustrated Magazine ~ November, 15 cents

Achmed Abdullah, James Francis Dwyer,
Carl Sandburg, H. Bedford-Jones, George Marsh,
Bill Adams, Fulton Grant, Robert Mill

A BAD CASE OF PIMPLES MADE NAT HATE TO GO PLACES-

A NICE CLUBBY GUY YOU ARE. WHAT'S THE IDEA – KEEPING YOURSELF ALL TO YOURSELF THIS WAY? FRAN'S PRETTY PEEVED AT YOU FOR TURNING DOWN HER INVITE
AW QUIT YELPING, STEVE – I'D GO FAST ENOUGH IF ONLY I DIDN'T HAVE THIS FACE FULL OF HICKIES – BUT GOSH· I LOOK SO AWFUL – I-

SAY, FRAN – I'VE FOUND OUT WHY NAT'S ACTING SO QUEER, AN' STICKS HOME SO MUCH – SEEMS HE'S ALL WORKED UP OVER THOSE HICKIES HE'S GOT
POOR KID – HE OUGHT TO EAT FLEISCHMANN'S YEAST – IT'S SIMPLY MARVELOUS HOWIT GETS RID OF PIMPLES- STEVE, WHY DON'T YOU TELL HIM ABOUT IT?

OH, ISN'T NAT IN, MRS. JONES? THEN WILL YOU GIVE HIM THESE? TELL HIM I'VE HEARD THIS YEAST JUST WRECKS PIMPLES – AN' THAT'S A FACT...
THANK YOU, STEVE – I'LL TELL NAT ALL YOU SAID AND I'LL MAKE SURE HE EATS THESE YEAST CAKES REGULARLY

PRETTY GOOD, ISN'T IT, WHAT YOU AN' ME AN' FLEISCHMANN'S YEAST DID FOR OLD NAT – HE'S ACTIN' LIKE A REGULAR GUY AGAIN SINCE THOSE PIMPLES DID A FADEOUT

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by clearing skin irritants out of the blood

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Publisher, The Blue Book Magazine

DONALD KENNICOTT, Editor

Published monthly, at McCall St., Dayton, Ohio. Subscription Offices—Dayton, Ohio. Editorial and Executive Offices—230 Park Ave., New York, N. Y. THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE— November, 1936. Vol. LXIV. No. 1.

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Entered as second-class matter, November 12, 1930, at the Post Office at Dayton, Ohio, under the Act of March 3, 1897. Subscription Price, $1.50 per year in U. S. and Canada; foreign postage $1.00. For change of address, give us four weeks' notice and send old address as well as new.

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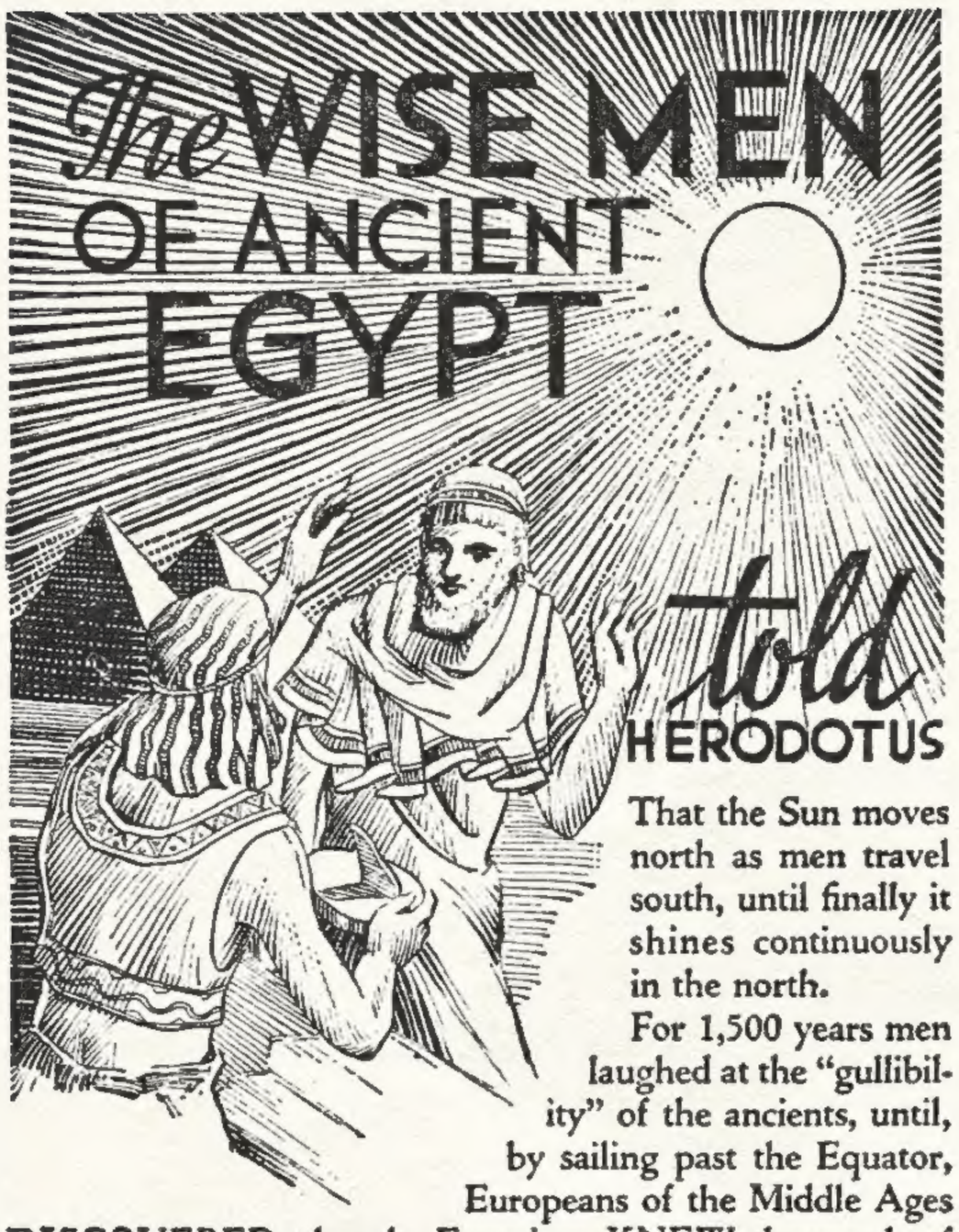

That the Sun moves north as men travel south, until finally it shines continuously in the north.

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For Your

THIS is your magazine. You'd probably like to know about some of the things planned for its immediate future, and we are listing a few of them below. But we can do a better job of pleasing you if you'll write and let us know about any other writers or any other kind of stories you'd like to see in your magazine. . . .

We admit that we think the stories already planned are pretty swell. For instance, next month begins a three-part serial by the gifted Gordon Keyne, of which Kit Carson is the central figure, and in which Marcus Whitman, Jim Bridger and other noted captains in the winning of the West play prominent parts. It will be illustrated by Jeremy Cannon with authentic pictures of these most exciting pages in American history.

With Mr. Keyne's great novel will appear the ultra-dramatic conclusion of 'Achmed Abdullah's "Tempest Over Africa;" one of Robert Mill's very best Department of Justice stories—"Satan's Gunsmith;" a fine novelette by Richard Wormser based on a hard-boiled race-track detective's most interesting case; a specially vivid story in H. Bedford-Jones' "Arms and Men" series, in which the first use of that important invention the percussion cap is described; another "different" football story by Eustace Cockrell; and many

Magazine

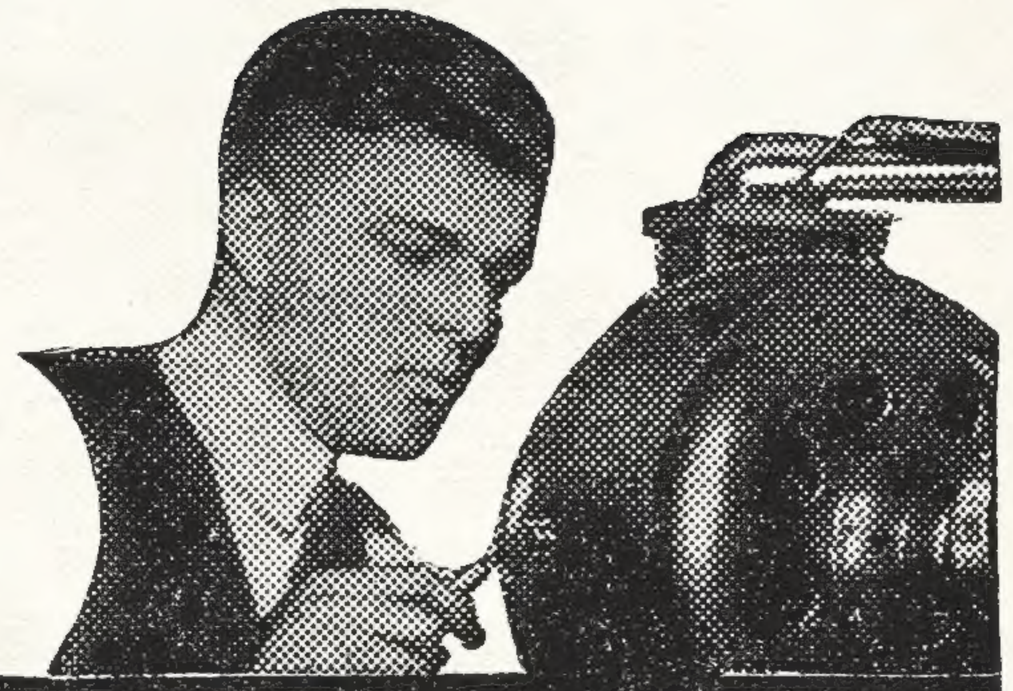
other features of conspicuous interest.

In the succeeding issue, probably, will appear the first of another brilliant series, "Ships and Men," by H. Bedford-Jones and Captain L. B. Williams in collaboration. Following the pattern of "Arms and Men," each of these stories will follow the development of ships down the adventurous ages, from dugout to battle-wagon. And each story will be accompanied by a full-page etching of the ship by the distinguished Yngve Soderberg, whose work you have already seen in illustration of "My Life at Sea" and "The Maintop." Wise readers will keep these etchings, and build themselves a treasured collection.

Space forbids mention of individual stories, but you can count on the best work of such established stars as James Francis Dwyer (he's at work on another "Caravan Treasure" too) Frederick Bechdolt, Beatrice Grimshaw, Leland Jamieson, Bigelow Neal and Robert Mill; and of that brilliant group of new writers which includes Fulton Grant, Francis and Eustace Cockrell, Richard Wormser, Kenneth Perkins, Luke Short and William Chester.

We've suggested, above, some of the features coming soon. . . . What else would you like?

—*The Editor.*



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Death Song

Four Americans struggle through the smoke of hell at the Inn of the Weary Christ. . . . By the author of "The Fist and the Sword."

"TOO smug, too comfortable and too satisfied," Jessop used to say. "There's no real inspiration here in America, and no real art. It takes more simplicity and less white enamel and electric gadgets to produce art. We are stifling and choking with radios, refrigerators and other home comforts. Now take the little people of old Spain, for instance—"

Jessop was talking about America, but that was before last July 16. Jessop was suffering from that curious delusion that supposes the apples in our neighbor's orchard are always bigger and riper than those in our own. And so Jessop did "take the little people of old Spain, for instance." And that's where this yarn comes from.

Mortimer Jessop III is an artist, and a good one. None of your sissy esthetes who go around swooning at sunsets and weeping for ecstasy when they see a bluebird, is Jessop. But he's a good-looking, lanky, sun-tanned lad who learned about Europe when he went over with the Fifth Marines to make the world safe for Democrats, and decided that the Old World had something that the New World just didn't have, so he stayed over there and painted those rather swell studies of French peasants and crowds of Spanish *aficionados* at the Madrid bull-fights you can see in the Boetchen Galleries any time you want to.

It would be wrong to say that Jessop isn't a good enough American. You can't come from good, solid New England Puritan stock and not have America tingling in your blood somewhere. But Jessop had it figured out that good art comes out of starvation and suffering, and that we were all going soft over here with too much of the "home comforts" he detested. Said he felt "crushed" by it, said it was "bourgeois," said it hampered him. So, having enough good American dollars to finance it, Mortimer Jessop III stayed in Europe just so he wouldn't be contaminated by steam-heat, air-conditioning and noiseless plumbing. Some people are like that. Did I say "some?" I mean a great many.

Jessop had been pedaling around the Spanish peninsula on a bicycle for months, dangling a sketch-box and a folding easel from one shoulder, and a huge guitar in a case from the other. Just how he managed to navigate with this baggage isn't precisely clear, but he did it. He claimed the guitar was better than a passport with the music-loving Spanish peasantry, and that it protected him against being "taken over" for a foreigner by them.

Leaving Valencia sometime in June, he had drifted over the back roads among little hamlets, and so it was hardly his fault if he didn't know about the revolution. He pedaled over the steep crags of the Sierra de la Torrecilla and down into the tiny town of Puerto Lumbreras, intending to go on to Granada; but when he got to the *octroi* of the town, a couple of *Guardias Civiles* halted him, saying:

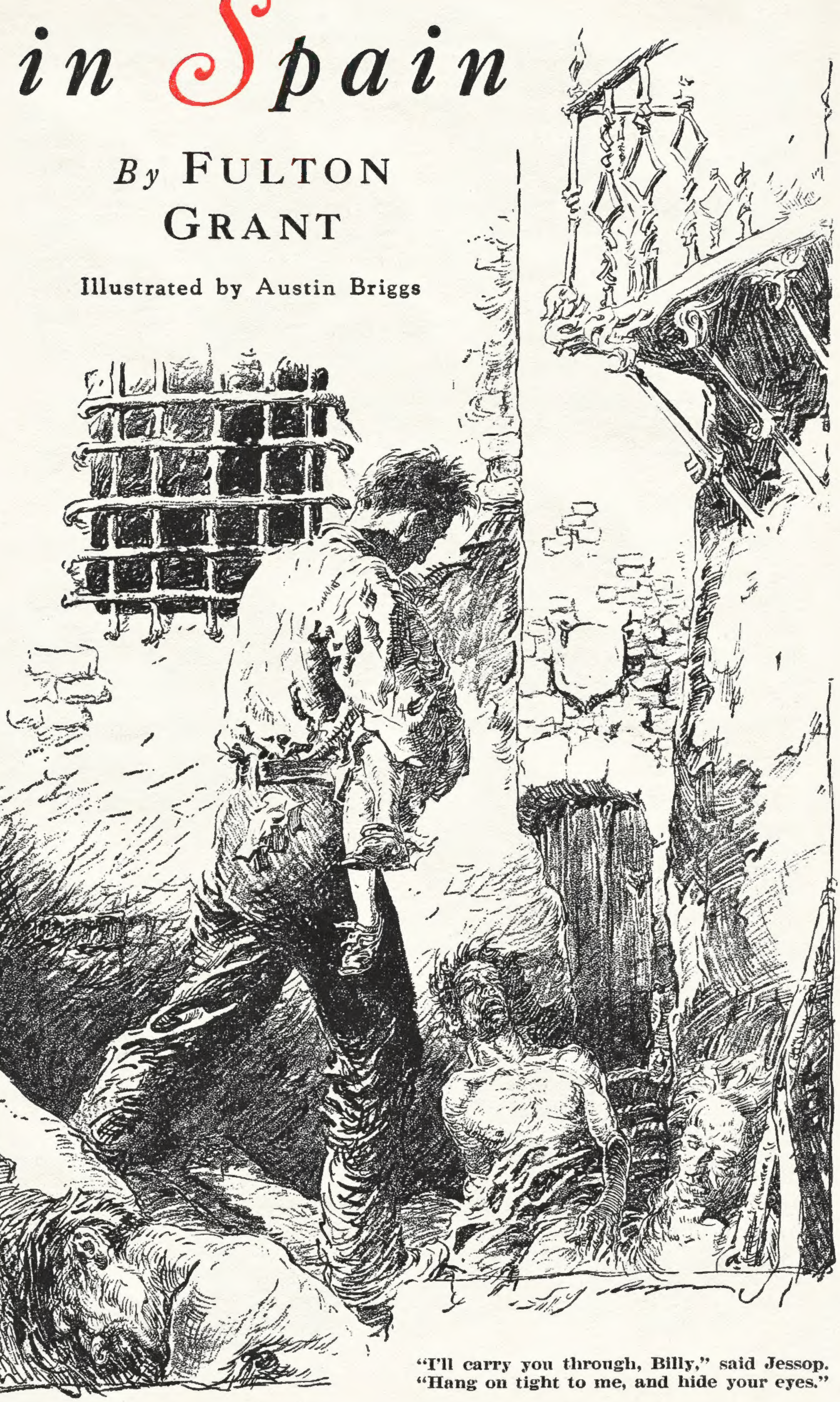
"It will be impossible for you to go on, señor. There is trouble. The roads are unsafe. An army of *insurrectos* is attacking from the south. Now if the señor will remain in Puerto Lumbreras until the Republic's soldiers have dispersed these rebels. . . . Or possibly word can be got through to the American consul at Murcia. It is with regret, señor, but such are the orders."

EWS comes slowly to the scattered villages of southern Spain, and Jessop did not know that Sotelo had been assassinated, nor that something which the newspapers call a "fascist army" had suddenly appeared out of nowhere to explode all over the country. But he is a sensible fellow; he did know that there had been unrest and trouble, and that a foreigner is better indoors than out when trouble breaks out abroad.

in Spain

By FULTON GRANT

Illustrated by Austin Briggs



"I'll carry you through, Billy," said Jessop. "Hang on tight to me, and hide your eyes."

So Jessop saw the officers' point and didn't argue. He rode into Puerto Lumbreras and located the *posada* or inn which the town afforded. It was, of course, the model of all *posadas* in Spain. Those you read about in "Don Quixote" could be dropped into 1936 Spain without being noticed: the same cobblestone courtyard, flanked by tumbling plaster buildings which seem to have been built in the Thirteenth Century; piles of manure all over the place, as though your Spaniard had a true friendliness toward flies and vermin; crude tile roofs or more often thatched roofs which let the rain squirt in; and the whole scattering group of structures orienting on the *entrada,* a huge roofed-over court through which the carts and donkeys have to pass to get to the stable, even though it is used for sitting, for sleeping and for drinking, by the guests.

THE particular inn,—and the only one in Puerto Lumbreras,—to which Jessop addressed himself was called the Posoda del Cristo Cansado—which, literally translated, means the *Inn of the Weary Christ.* Whether or not there was anything prophetic in this name is a matter which we will leave to your own conjecture later on. The *entrada* was filled. Piles of straw were strewn about and serving as beds for sleeping travelers whose bodies seemed mere blobs in the false light. At long tables were burly *arrieros* or trucksters, drinking their liquor to banish impending trouble to that *mañana* to which Spanish people consign all care and trouble. Piles of dried fish, called *baccala'o* filled the corners and the aisles; and a fat, bright-faced woman who was the owner of the place and whose name was (inevitably) Dolores, was bustling about.

Jessop went through to the stables, stowed his bicycle along with the donkeys, mules, manure, rats, sleeping gypsy children and general filth, and returned to the court to await events.

Now Jessop's Spanish is excellent, and his costume of muddy *alpargatas,* baggy peasant-trousers, rain-soaked sombrero and faded blue denim jacket which he affected in order to pass more easily among the little towns, made it a very natural and simple thing for him to join in the general conversation.

And it was an equally natural thing for him to ask of the trucksters:

"This trouble, señores, you feel it is a serious thing?"

Across from him sat an enormously obese individual, shaped precisely like an onion, who stared at him from sharp little beads of eyes:

"Serious, señor? Is it not, then, serious when brother kills brother? Answer me that, *hombre.*"

There was a deep fire in this man's voice, and Jessop felt uncertain in his subject of conversation. Still he replied:

"Yes, señor, that is serious. And yet in history Spain has had many revolutions, but always remains the same. Nothing can kill your grand old tradition. This will pass, will it not, and Spain will go on—strong in her tradition, strong in her glorious refusal to accept the stupid excesses which other nations think are progress."

Now, this was typical of Jessop. It was *old* Spain that he loved—gay, sunny, singing old Spain, so colorful, so artistic, so natural; the only country remaining in a world of things commercial and practical, where truth and simplicity and love of life still carried on uncontaminated. He felt pretty sure that he understood the nature of the Spanish people. He felt pretty safe in saying this. But the onion-man reposed his glass on the table and leaned over to him, saying grimly:

"You are wrong, señor. What is it, this thing you call tradition? Can it grow vegetables for my mules to haul? Can it fill empty stomachs? Can it feed the poor? I am only a plain man, señor, and I know nothing of this thing you call tradition."

Jessop again was filled with a great uneasiness. He could not reply to that. And the man stared at him, while one of the others said:

"Have you seen the blood spilled, *hombre?* Only yesterday was I in Alhama with my cart. I have seen what I have seen. Please God, señor, that we do not today see what I saw there."

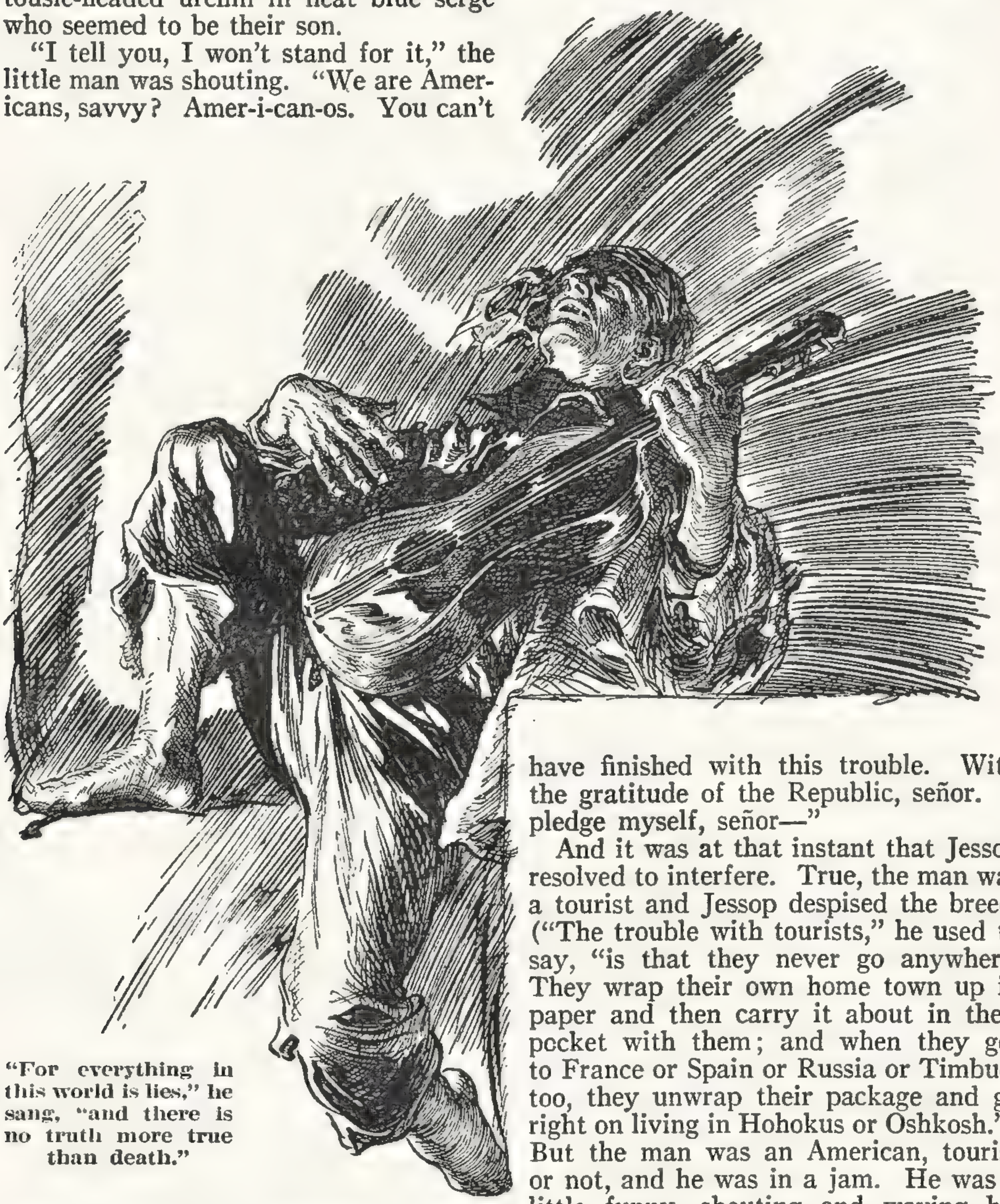
And there was a great, chilling silence that closed down on all at the table.

PRESENTLY there was an interruption—a noise at the great doorway of the court, and much commotion there. Two guards in uniform were urging in a little group of persons whose costume and speech and manner were in such sharp contrast to the atmosphere and the people in that room, that Jessop's ill-chosen conversation was forgotten in a general curiosity.

The little, aging, dumpy man in bright tweeds was shouting in English. The

two guards were shouting likewise, but in something less definite than English or yet Spanish. The frail little woman who appeared to be the tweedy person's wife was weeping, and clutching the tousle-headed urchin in neat blue serge who seemed to be their son.

"I tell you, I won't stand for it," the little man was shouting. "We are Americans, savvy? Amer-i-can-os. You can't



"For everything in this world is lies," he sang, "and there is no truth more true than death."

get away with this. I want my car back, or I'll complain to the ambassador at Madrid. I'll get you fired. I'll have an apology from this country; I'll—"

"But señor," the younger of the two officers broke in with admirable restraint, "you have not understand. This, it is the war, señor—*la revolucion*. There is only for you to remain here in the *posada*. To voyage upon the road, she is not safe. About your automobile, señor, I am desolate, but it passes me. It is the orders, señor. The orders are to seize all motor vehicles for the service of Spain. And behold, I do not steal her, señor. Have I not give you one receipt? Your car, she will be return to you when the soldiers have finished with this trouble. With the gratitude of the Republic, señor. I pledge myself, señor—"

And it was at that instant that Jessop resolved to interfere. True, the man was a tourist and Jessop despised the breed. ("The trouble with tourists," he used to say, "is that they never go anywhere. They wrap their own home town up in paper and then carry it about in their pocket with them; and when they get to France or Spain or Russia or Timbuctoo, they unwrap their package and go right on living in Hohokus or Oshkosh.") But the man was an American, tourist or not, and he was in a jam. He was a little funny, shouting and waving his hands like that, but he was pathetic. Jessop could see his name printed in enormous white letters on one of the bags that the officers had carried in for them: "*Myron J. Butts, Marconway, Ill.*" He grinned when he read it. People with names like that ought to stick to their fireside, he thought. Pity about the little wife, though. She was scared stiff, and almost hysterical.

So, seeing that the argument with the officers was getting nowhere at all,

Jessop got out of his seat and stepped over to them, waving the officers away, and saying:

"Let be, *caballeros*. I will occupy myself with these my countrymen. They do not, it seems, understand."

The officers were glad enough to go, and thanked him gratefully with their eyes as they slid out of trouble through the door.

Then Jessop turned to the raging little fellow and said genially:

"I'm afraid, sir, that we're all in the same boat. The roads are pretty risky just now, and even this town may be attacked by the rebel army. Can't I urge you to join me—"

But Jessop had forgotten his own costume, which, to be perfectly fair, did not reveal to an American tourist the cultured fellow-countryman he really was. It is also likely that the man Butts was so enraged that he didn't care who got the brunt of his ire. He whirled on Jessop, glaring, and demanded:

"Now just who or what in hell are you?"

Jessop caught on quickly. He understood the man's mistaken conclusion, and grinned, saying:

"Oh, I'm just another American tourist. Name's Jessop."

That was probably the first time in his life that Mortimer Jessop had tamely admitted to being a tourist, but he felt it was for the best.

"I was going to suggest," he went on, "that we all try to make the best of a bad situation. I don't imagine the rebels will ask for our passports before shooting. In the meantime we're lucky to be in this inn, in case the worst happens here. Not quite the Ritz, of course, but fairly safe. Thick walls, you know. Now, won't you and your family join me in a little refreshment?"

POOR Myron J. Butts! Any of his kind might have made the same error, for they judge quickly by the outward and visible signs of their own conventions.

The man glared and turned his back, and strode to where his weeping wife stood guard over the luggage. And Jessop, rather astonished, could hear him muttering something about "—damned beach-combers—bums who go native—parasites—can't panhandle me—ought to be stopped—"

So Jessop gave up his well-meant plan and returned to the trucksters, the more convinced that he was right about America, Americans and especially American tourists. . . .

Time passed. The Butts family huddled in a corner by a rickety table, forced to use their own bags and trunks for seats.

Jessop carefully avoided furtherance of the unfortunate conversation that he had begun with the peasants, but joined them heartily in the drinking of aguardiente, hoping, as they did, to dispel the tenseness, the gloom and the nervous uncertainty that was closing in on the entire room like a thick, stifling blanket.

THUS occupied, he did not see the little boy with tousled hair, pale face and eager eyes, creep away from his still puffing and angry father and his frightened mother, to explore the mysteries of that—to him—fabulous room, filled with equally fabulous beings.

He did not see him creep from the piles of dried fish across to the family of hunchback dwarfs who were seated on their straw by the single dim window, drinking their wine from a skin *bota*, and stand there in child wonder at them. He did not see the urchin steal from the dwarfs to the fat Moorish-looking fellow who slept on the stone floor under a bright-colored blanket, while the powerful snores billowed and ricocheted out of the cavern of his mouth, and then again, from that wonder, run back again to gaze at the queer pale, unshaven and pinched features of the lean gypsy called Much-of-Nothing, who sat cross-legged in the recesses by the kitchen entrance, vainly endeavoring to tie together the broken gut strings of a battered lute. Of this Jessop saw nothing at all.

But presently something touched him, tentatively and timidly, upon the knee, and a subdued little voice, speaking English, said:

"Hello."

Then he did see the lad, saw the eager, staring eyes, and the wonder-filled little face so drawn and strange from too much parental attention. "Hello," said the boy again, and Jessop looked down at him and said:

"Why, hello, sonny. How come you're buzzing around?"

The youngster didn't reply to that. He looked up, not afraid, precisely, but hesitant, and terribly eager. Then he said:

"What d'you wear those funny clothes for?"

A day before, any day before, Jessop could have answered that pretty clearly; but somehow the boy's question embarrassed him.

"Why—just for fun, I guess," he said, somewhat dishonestly. "What's your name, sonny?"

"Billy," the boy replied solemnly. "My papa's mad at you, isn't he?"

Jessop was embarrassed again.

"Is he?" he asked. "I wouldn't know."

But the boy had already forgotten about that. His eyes were roving, taking inventory of all the wonders that filled that wonderful place. And his eager eyes spotted the sketchbox, easel and guitar which were piled beside Jessop's place on the bench. He pointed, suddenly, boyishly, and asked with excitement:

"What's in that big box, Mister?"

"That's a guitar, Billy."

"What's a guitar?"

"An instrument. Makes music. You like music?"

"Gee! You bet. Will you play for me?"

"Why—not right now," began Jessop, a little startled, and feeling that this was scarcely the moment for things of so light and frivolous a vein as music. He remembered with a quick flash of mental vision the grim, earnest face of the onion-shaped philosopher. He wondered if he knew the peasants as well as he had thought. Wondered if he had been right in supposing that your Spaniard, like your Neapolitan, will abandon everything for the sake of song. "No—not just now, little Billy," he said.

But the boy's eager, prying fingers had already fumbled with the catch on the guitar-case, and the eyes of the men at the table had followed the boy's excited pointing with a curiosity no less than his own.

"*Holà,*" cried one of them in a loud voice. "The señor, he is *musico!*" Meaning, of course, a professional musician.

Jessop, startled, denied the charge.

"But no," he said. "A poor *aficionado* only—an amateur, not worthy to play."

IT wasn't modesty. It was something far deeper than modesty—fear: a fear of committing a sacrilege. Things were too tense in that place. Those men had been too serious.

But he was mistaken. It was no use, no use at all. Already the guitar was out of the case. The trucksters were shouting and clamoring. Everyone was

"Please God, señor, that we do not today see what I saw in Alhama."

clamoring. Hands thrust the instrument into his lap. The very sight of the guitar electrified the big room. Sleepers awoke. Unseen people lifted their voices. Fingers were beating out rhythms on the table; feet were tapping; wine was flowing. Almost of themselves Jessop found his fingers on the strings. He was suddenly the center of a general commotion. Impossible to refuse.

Jessop is a good musician. No person with a sensitive ear can follow a trail about Spain for years without picking up something of those complex rhythms of the *canto flamenco*, the *guajiras*, the *faroukas*, the *malagueñas*, which seem to boil up out of Spanish people like a flux. Strange, deep, intimate forms, they are, which more stolid Northerners cannot ever quite comprehend, carrying in their powerful modes the expression of a people who are unafraid to reveal their deepest emotions, richly and without shame or restraint.

His fingers swept softly across the six strings, then plunged into a resounding *rasgéado*, the formal, classical, compelling prelude of the farouka. All other sound in the room stopped as though the first chord were a command. Clustered notes spoke an ageless, wordless language, transcending intellect and speaking directly into the inner consciousness of those people. And then—absolute silence, as Jessop paused before attacking

"Would you also strike your God, O foolish children?" the

the strict, pulsating beat of the accompaniment.

He had thrown back his head a little, ready to sing as best he could in his own foreign way the words he had memorized all too imperfectly—words whose fantastic symbolism he, a Northerner, could never hope to understand.

But neither his voice nor those words ever came.

In that pause another voice lifted up —grew, swelled out of the semi-darkness of the room—rich and full and tinged with a certain futility of timbre, as is the Spanish voice.

"*Aye-e-e-e-e-e-e—*" The voice caught and quavered skillfully around the minor seventh of his last chord, perching there like a bird ready for flight.

And then, as his fingers tore the full cadence of the farouka from the guitar, weaving its rhythm like lace about the voice, the singer hurled himself into one of those strange, extempore cries of passion mingled with pessimism which is the canto flamenco of Spain.

Yo no creo en mi madre,
Aunque de mi hablé la gente.
Porque todo en este mundo es mentira,
Nene de mi corazón, nene de mi corazón.
No hay mas verdad que es la muerte,
No hay mas verdad que es la muerte!
Y no hay quien me lo contradiga—

There was only one human in that room who could have sung those words—the gypsy Much-of-Nothing. He had set down his own hopeless instrument at the first chord of Jessop's guitar, and all the fierce agony of song in him, long pent up, had burst out, irresistibly, like a prolonged cry. Pure improvisation, it was. You cannot write down such words nor such music. It is true of the flamenco that only the accompaniment is permanent; the words and the music follow as an *obbligato,* compelled into its patterns by forces beyond the control of the singer. And this song—it was the soul-cry of an agonizing people finding voice through the gypsy, the voice of a people in distress, bewildered by forces which they cannot understand or endure.

young padre challenged. For a moment the crowd halted.

"I do not believe in my mother," he sang, "although people may talk about me. For everything in this world is lies, oh, my sweetheart, and there is no truth more true than death—no truth more true than death! And there is nobody who will contradict me."

And then it came.

LIKE the very clap of Death itself, it was, as though to prove the irony of the song's unimaginable words. The explosion of it shook the plastered walls of the inn, shook the very mountains in their rocks, sent a concussion into the fibers of that little group of frightened people, flung an entire revolution of massacre and bloodshed into that peaceful hamlet of Puerto Lumbreras, where had been, before, only quiet and tranquillity and simplicity and dogged acceptance.

The shell must have landed some hundreds of yards away from the inn, but fragments clattered on the walls and sent a shower of thatch from the roof tumbling onto the heads of the wine-drinkers inside.

"Por los clavos de Cristo!" some one whispered hoarsely.

"Madre! O Madre! O Santa Madre de Dios!" squealed one of the dwarfs; and as the singer broke off, gasping, the piercing cry of a mother:

"Billy! Bill-e-e-e-e-e-e!"

Running feet outside and inside. The tweeds of Myron J. Butts of Marconway, Ill., were scurrying across the stony floor, flickering in the shadows, upsetting a pile of fish, and stumbling over other frightened, scrambling people. He got to the table where his little son stood, shivering and scared. His arms reached for the boy, snatched him up, carried him back to their seat among the luggage.

Outside and inside was scramble. Wooden shoes clattered on the cobbles of the courtyard, making notes like a xylophone. . . . Scurry, scuffle, bustle. Screams of frightened men and women, cries of startled children. And more distant, the prattle of small-arms. . . .

Then, the next shell.

This one struck nearer. Concussion opened a large gash in the wall, just over the door. A bursting fragment crashed through the single window, scattering slivers of glass over the hunchbacks who were huddling in their blankets. They squealed like frightened puppies, and broke for the dark rear of the room.

"Behold," said the onion-man, with a grim smile at Jessop. "Behold, it is *la revolucion.* Is it not strange?"

Then there was a sound as of a swelling tide at sea. Nearer and nearer it came; and out of it arose shoutings, yellings as though the very gargoyles of the ancient church in the plaza had come to life to scream their ancient madness at an astonished world. Running feet were darting through, past the great doorway. Figures of people, not quite seen, flitted by like shadows. But they were yelling, shouting shadows.

THEN one of the shadows seemed to detach itself and to stand beside the broad plaster shoulder of the doorway. It stood there briefly. Then, as though eyes had grown more used to the half-light inside, the man advanced into the dimness, pausing again for a moment to make a sign in the air with his fingers while his voice was clearly heard by everyone to say, almost in a sharp whisper:

"*Benediximus vobis,*" sibilating the Latin "*x*" after the Spanish fashion. "*In nomine Domine.*"

It was a padre in his black frock and shovel hat. His young face was partly covered by one hand which clutched it, and Jessop could see a trickle of blood leaking through the white fingers. The man might be wounded, he thought, but he had remembered the souls of his people before his own body, giving them his blessing. The man walked hastily now, and shakily, into the deepest corner where the three dwarfs were cringing and whining; and there he sat down, calmly, his eyes closed, his fingers clutching his rosary while his lips murmured silently.

But the crowd roared again in the doorway, like the mumbling of great disaster. Light was suddenly blotted out, and milling figures pressed in, stopping in the great archway to blink at the darkness inside. Jessop saw them clearly. Boys, they were, most of them. Mere boys—some scarcely older than little Billy Butts, mere babes. Their leader seemed to be an emaciated fellow with the dust of marble quarries over his loose cotton garments. He was holding them back with a huge club, while he peered into the dimness.

Suddenly he cried out:

"Behold, he is here! Did I not say it? *A la muerte! A la muerte todos los frailuchos!* . . . Death to the Little Brothers, the traitors!"

And behind him they took up the cry, yelling it like a pack of hounds: "Death! To the death!" And pouring through the great arched doorway like a flowing tide, filling the place, overturning tables, chairs, piles of fish, kicking the dwarfs aside, stepping upon Jessop's folded easel and shattering it with insane feet, flooding the astonished, agonizing crowd of travelers, who could only sit there in impotent wonder.

And the padre met them, unafraid. Standing suddenly erect, his fine young head thrown back, disregarding the trickle of blood that still oozed from the stone-wound at his mouth, he lifted high the cross of his rosary and challenged them:

"Would you also strike your God, O foolish children?"

It was the cross that held them, though only for a moment. The habit of centuries was not to be wiped out by a few years of fermenting doctrines. Their leader halted, shunted. Behind him the crowd halted, hesitant; but from the rear, still beyond the door came the rest of them, pressing, baying hounds, crying their cry of death. Suddenly there burst through the doorway a squat, apelike fellow, hairy and naked to the waist. He brandished an ancient musket. He fought his way through them like a maniac, shrieking death and blasphemy upon the young priest. He fired from under his arm, taking no aim; but the distance needed no aim. The roar filled the place with its startling din. The noble face of the man of God suddenly vanished, transfigured into a welter of blood. He collapsed, sank upon himself slowly, crumpled into the filth of the floor.

IT needed only that. Their howls grew into bedlam. They surged over the padre's body. Hands snatched him savagely from the floor—tore his frock, rent his garments. The ape-like one snatched the shovel hat that had fallen from the priest's head and clapped it, dripping blood, on his own grotesque head, an ironical trophy of this thing which Jessop

had already heard called the "purifying" of Spain.

"No hay mas verdad que es la muerte!"

"There is no truth," had sung the gypsy, "more true than death!" How ghastly was the irony of it now! What had happened in this Spain that Jessop knew, this simple people he had come to find, this refuge from America's stultifying "home comforts!" Was this, then, the "truth" he had been seeking?

BUT the mob, having begun their "purification," was retreating, melting through the arched doorway, rumbling and clattering across the courtyard, dragging the dead padre's body with them, singing, shouting, screaming with an hysterical mockery of joy. Jessop watched them. A kind of paralysis had come over him. A kind of nakedness. He saw, suddenly, the naked, horrified souls of all that roomful of refugees. Stark, they were, and stricken. One of the men—the one who had witnessed the maniacal blood-letting in Alhama—sat there with his eyes round, making a slight movement with his lips and crossing himself. His eye caught Jessop's. He leaned forward and whispered:

"Behold, *hombre;* now you have seen only a beginning. Tell me, can this thing you call tradition save us from this?"

And Jessop could only stare. There was no answer.

His dazed vision swept about the huge emptying room. He saw the little American family, caught in the same horror—the frail, motherly little woman from our Midwest, the simple and goodly inheritor of honest pioneers, frozen with unbelievable terror. He saw her, and he sensed a new agony in himself at the sight of her. He suddenly knew that in that woman, that even in her irritable and tempestuous little husband, there could be nothing in common with these trampled little people of Spain whose hands were now dipped in blood. Smug, provincial, narrow, comfortable they were, perhaps; but there was no such madness in America. That woman became, suddenly, a symbol of health and peace of the soul. A symbol of a cleaner, finer truth.

"No hay mas verdad—nothing more true than death!" But in that woman's terror-stricken face there was another truth that gave the lie to this pessimism.

And then he saw the little boy.

It was evident that little Billy Butts had not understood the fullness of tragedy which had taken place before his eyes. He had seen something remote from tragedy. He had seen other little boys—children of his own age, or a little more, with long knives or with pistols in their hands, playing a game, yelling and shouting and apparently having a good time. Little Billy had not seen their cruelty. The cruelty of youth is that of instinct, not of the heart.

And then, suddenly, one of those ragged babes, a soul-parched son of the starving Spanish peasantry, noticed the little American boy in his clean, neatly pressed blue serge, his stiff, bright gray felt hat. The urchin's act was a natural one, a universal gesture common to children of all castes and races. His hand reached out and snatched the hat from Billy's head with a shout of child-laughter. Another urchin, joining the fun, grabbed at the blue serge jacket and tore it with a spray of buttons. Hat vanished. A portion of the jacket vanished out of the doorway in the hands of their hilarious captors. And little Billy reacted as would any other boy: he plunged after them.

"Billy!" shrieked the mother. "Billy! Billy, come back here," cried the father. But to no avail. The mother screamed, started up, but failed and collapsed in her seat. The father, oblivious to all danger, plunged into that seething crowd after his son. Jessop saw him fight his way through, swinging frantic fists, making awkward, surging movements with his dumpy body, tearing madly at the mob that pressed about the doorway. And Jessop saw him disappear, swallowed up in the press.

The thing that happened inside—in the heart of Mortimer Jessop III, American expatriate—was a simple thing, perhaps, but not easy for him to comprehend. That man out there was an American; in a sense, one of his own flesh. Why had he not gone to the help of that brave priest? Why was he able to sit there, helpless, motionless, a witness to brave death, and not stir a hand to interfere? And now why did Jessop spring from his seat of comparative safety and plunge headlong out of that door, to save, if he might, this arrogant, smug little Midwesterner who had but now been rude to him? There is no explaining those things.

HE was in the courtyard—he was rushing toward the outer gate, screaming the man's name: "Butts, you damned

"Gee, I'm glad you came, Mister. I was—so scared an' everythin'!"

fool, come back here!" He was straining every fiber in his body, not bravely, but without sense of danger. He was fighting the inertia of his own legs, like a man in a dream.

And then the next shell hit.

The very concussion of it hurled Jessop into the mud and the seeping manure of the cobbles, bruising him, tearing him, stunning him.

Only in a dazed manner was he conscious of a shower of biting fragments that rained on him. When his mind cleared slightly there was blood in his face and a searing pain in his shoulder. He was fighting a fog in his brain. He was slowly struggling to his knees. His eyes were fighting for sight. And then sight came, bringing horror with it.

Bodies were strewn everywhere. Some still writhed and cried out, pitifully, in their pain. Some lay still and crumpled. The shell had exploded in an angle of the wall, crumbling into a smoking débris the square, squat structure which served as the kitchen, shattering the outer gate into a shambles.

He got to his feet and staggered forward. He could see, still ahead of him, the running figures of those of that savage mob who remained unhurt, but they were silent now. He could hear the clatter of their running feet on the pavement of the tiny little street that flanked the inn—the Inn of the Weary Christ! He could see the inn's shattered sign, broken and flung face up on the cobbles, showing only the ironical words, *Cristo Cansado*. How weary must that Christ be now?

At the very gate itself lay the figure of Myron J. Butts of Marconway, Ill., face down, sprawling, his tweeds in the mud, trampled, torn, his hands flung out. Was he dead? Wounded? Jessop could not tell. The face of the tousle-headed little boy was in his mind. He leaped over Butts' body, feeling right in leaving him there while he hurried after the boy. Even if the man were dead, there was still a chance to get the boy.

IN the little alley that served for a street he could see the straggling mob, a mere handful now, surging down toward the plaza where another, denser throng swarmed like ants. He could hear shooting, the irregular snap of small arms, the chatter of machine-guns, weaving a fabric with the general hubbub.

And Jessop followed blindly, like an insect in pursuit of a flame.

The plaza was dense and clustering with people. Mad and screaming people they were. He halted on their fringe, but he could see nothing of the boy Billy Butts. An army of men and women and children, like dancing fiends, were foaming about the portals of the great church, from which flames and smoke were belching.

This was another "purification," another "purge." The gunfire was largely below the town, where the houses creep over a *rambla* or terraced hill; and Jessop could see uniforms mingled with that terrible civilian army of men and women and mere children, fighting an invisible enemy who was their own flesh

and their own blood. The Old pitted against the New. An idea pitted against an idea.

Jessop mingled with the crowd. Hundreds of little urchins were on the fringe of it, yelling lustily, singing wildly some formless song which he recognized, after much listening, as the warped Spanish version of the "Internationale." What could those children know of Marx and Bakhunin and their doctrines? Or those Russians of such children and their needs?

But in all this mass of mad youth, there was no sign of Billy Butts.

THEN another shell struck. In the very center of the plaza it struck, and the destruction was terrible to see. Its spray of death cut down hundreds, spreading them in their own blood, like stricken ants crushed by an invisible foot. . . . Nauseating. Horrible.

Something plucked at Jessop's elbow. Something whizzed past his cheek, singing death's song. He knew, suddenly, that his right arm was numb. He grew conscious of his own danger for the first time since his mad plunge from the courtyard. He ran through the amazed and scattering rabble toward the broad, boxlike public building which flanked the plaza, and darted under the portico where the plaster columns might give him some shelter. The strength and feeling was slowly returning to his arm now, but there was blood trickling from his sleeve. He hurried through the arches toward the building's rear. He was suddenly alone there. The cries of the people and the staccato rattle of machine-guns, intertwining, formed a gruesome harmony for which the beat of the exploding shells, hurled by Spaniards upon other Spaniards, formed a slow, deadly counterpoint.

Alone there, the words of that truckster came back to him: "Have you seen the blood spilled, *hombre?*"

And the other one: "This tradition, can it grow vegetables? Can it feed the poor?"

And the gypsy's song: *"No hay mas verdad*—there is no truth more true than death!" The very pulsating beat of the guns and the yelling crowd seemed to echo the song: "No truth more true than death . . . *no hay mas verdad que es la muerte—que es la muerte—la muerte!"*

And then a very real, very human little voice broke through and came to him.

"Mister. . . . Oh, Mister!"

Whispering hoarsely, in English, it came, saying:

"Oh, Mister. . . . Please, Mister!"

In back of the boxlike structure were great sheds which had been built for the horses of state, in the days before automobiles. They made a sharp, dark angle with the large plaster cube of the municipal building. The voice came from this dark space, and Jessop could see by straining, a pallid, frightened face and the figure of a little boy, huddling there, shrinking close to the wall. It was Billy. His jacket was gone. His white shirt was nearly ripped from his meager frame. His eager face looked up hopefully at Jessop, and his lips framed the whisper, "Mister—oh, Mister!

"Gee, I'm glad—you—came, Mister. . . . I was—so scared, an' everythin'!"

Jessup caught the child in his arms and held him close.

"Sh-s-sh! It's all right now, Billy. Don't talk."

But the boy still hardly knew his danger.

"It was when the big noise came, I got scared," he said, "somethin' sort of pushed me, an' I fell down, an' then I got up an' ran 'cause I was scared. I was after those kids, you see, an' I sort of got lost then. Was it a cannon, Mister?"

"Yes, kid, that was a cannon, all right. Now keep still. We'll find your folks."

"But I want—"

"Sh-s-s-sh!"

"But I want to show you somethin'."

"Be still. Let's hurry."

"But I've found our car. . . . They took it, an' I found it."

"Good Lord, where?"

JESSOP set the boy down, a gleam of hope coming to him. Deep from the second shed came the soft purring of a motor. They ran quickly, skirting the wall and ducking inside, lest unfriendly eyes should see them. In the shadows glistened faintly the shiny new body of an American automobile, the motor idling gently.

"I got her started, but I was scared to go out," Billy said.

"Good lad! Get in, and we'll try to break through that mob."

It was an effort to roll the long car's body out of the shed, and still more of an effort to let it glide carefully down the narrow alley that passed behind the municipal building, for the passage was

winding, and left only inches of clearance on either side. But they made it. They glided unnoticed in back of the flaming church; and as they passed, Jessop could see through the dense screen of smoke the horrible sight of the dead padre's body, swinging from a crude cross of boards, naked, bloody, recognizable only by the flat clerical hat which the mob had stuck askew on his torn head. It was like looking into hell's pit through the smoke, and seeing the devils dance around their victims.

Slowly they made progress. The car made no sound audible above the unending din of the crowd and the guns. They had to pass an open street which might have let them be seen from the plaza, but at that moment a shell from one of the fascist field-pieces burst at the other extreme of the square, and Jessop swiftly maneuvered the machine ahead while the crowd was busy scrambling away from the flying débris.

IN the little alley that led to the Posada del Cristo Cansado, bodies were strewn like sheaves. Twice Jessop had to stop and move corpses from his path; he could not bring himself to drive over them. The gate of the inn was unrecognizable débris. Bodies clustered in its shambles—but the figure of Myron J. Butts was no longer there. Jessop felt a surge of hope in him.

"We'll leave the car, Billy," he said. "I'll carry you through. We'll have to chance somebody finding the car, but it's not likely they will—not in all this riot. Hang on tight to me, and hide your eyes."

He carried the boy to the door. He peered inside, but the gloom within blinded him at first. No sight, but sound came to him out of the gloom—softly, rhythmically, a singing and a strumming. And as his eyes grew accustomed to the light, he could make out the figure of Much-of-Nothing, the gypsy, facing the wall, crouching over Jessop's guitar, and singing softly to himself, as though to console himself for the carnage and horror outside—singing still that strange, eerie song, terrible in its timeliness, terrible in its ironical suggestion, its futility, its pessimism:

No hay mas verdad que es la muerte,
No hay mas verdad que es la muerte,
Y no hay quien me lo contradiga—

Jessop stepped in. He called out, gently, the eternal greeting of Spain:

"Vaya, señores!" Then he burst into the question: "And where are the two Americanos? Are they—"

It was the onion-shaped man who jerked his thumb inside toward the darkling rear of the *entrada.*

"You have the boy, señor?" the man said slowly. "Then it is good. He alone can save the woman. The man, he is wounded, but his life is there."

Putting Billy down, he gave him a little push toward the dark patch where the stricken man and his wife were huddled on a straw pallet.

Billy ran to them—but something held Jessop back. This was not his moment. He did not wish to see their misery, nor the agony of their joy at finding the child.

He turned to the men seated at the table and accepted the offered glass of aguardiente, saying with simplicity:

"I have been in the plaza, señores. It is that now I understand. I have seen the blood."

They nodded. They too understood.

It was the fat philosopher among them who said, slowly, and as though he had been living with the thought:

"It does not matter now, señor. The insurrectos, perhaps they will come here; perhaps the soldiers will run. Or perhaps the people will drive them off. But it is all the same. Of what importance is it that there is one government in Madrid, or another? The people, they die. They starve. There is only death. *No hay mas verdad, señor, que es la muerte.*"

The others nodded silently.

The gypsy strummed his guitar—sang his song.

FOR a time there was only the sound of a mother's glad sobbing mingled with the gypsy's song, and outside, the distant boom of the guns, the nearer rattle of rifles, the constant baying of the wolf-pack mob. Then a hand was laid gently on Jessop's shoulder. He turned to see the white face of Myron J. Butts—not haughty now, not disdainful now, not wrathful or arrogant now, but filled with a great unspoken emotion. He was holding out his hand.

He was muttering:

"Mr. Jessop—I can't—I don't know how to—thank you."

Jessop took the hand and pressed it.

Behind her husband came a tottering woman, carrying her little boy whose tears, long held back, were now streaming freely down his face.

"God bless you, sir," she whispered. "Oh—God—bless—you!"

"No truth more true than death," the voice was chanting; and realization of the great untruth of that song welled up in Jessop. Here, before him, in the faces of those two people, father and mother, he saw another truth. *That* was truth. Not the song.

"Let's go," was all he could find words to say. "Let's try to get through—if you are strong enough, Mrs. Butts. I think we have a chance, if we can only get to the car."

"Anything—oh, anything," murmured the woman.

Jessop saluted the peasants. Passing behind him, he laid a hand on the gypsy's shoulder, saying:

"The guitar is yours, my friend. I may not need it where I am going."

The man ceased his strumming and turned around, the pleased smile of a child on his pinched face,

"*Gracias, señor,*" he said. "*Muchas gracias—y vaya con Dios!*"

And behind them all as they crept out of that blood-stained courtyard, they could hear the words repeated on many lips:

"*Con Dios—vaya con Dios—señor—señora.*"

THE rifle-fire at the other end of the town was thicker. The mob's yelling had grown into a rumble, crossed with sharp yells and shoutings, and Jessop knew that the charge had come, and the citizens were fighting hand to hand with the rebels. But there was no other soul alive in the street. Their car stood there, still purring, an ironical note of modern science in silhouette against antiquity and backwardness.

The main highway was not hard to find. The dirt road was baked hard in the sun. The dust rose thickly about them, screening them like a cloud of smoke. Fifty kilometers to Murcia, it was; and they drove on silently, rapidly, each one thinking his own thoughts.

They passed above Lorca, and there was more shelling and the sound of the field-pieces of the rebels. On the high precipitous crag, overlooking the suffering town, a group of mounted men came charging down upon them, and one of them called out a command to halt.

Jessop stopped the car. Turning to warn those behind him to let him do the talking, he saw that Myron J. Butts carried in his hand a little American flag. It seemed to Jessop suddenly that he could see in that flag the broad wheat-fields of the Middle West, the tall and stately pine forests of Oregon, and the slumbering green hills of New England.

AN officer, in the uniform of old Spain —of pre-Republican Spain—saluted them gravely. His was a haughty, fine face, but troubled and gaunt and lined. Jessop explained their destination, told of the American consul in Murcia, and produced their passports.

The officer saluted again, smiling curiously.

"It is well," he said. "Go with God. Murcia is not yet under attack. I only regret, señor, that I am not able to give you a detachment for guard, and that you, the guests of my country, should have seen her in such trouble. *Vaya, señor, con Dios!*"

Then he rode away to join his men, shaking his head sadly.

Within the hour they were in lime-colored Murcia, under the orange-trees, and threading through silent throngs of people—people who waited, wondering, hoping, fearing, listening to the far-away thunder of revolt, battle, violence and death. . . .

The American consul received them immediately. A smile played over his worried face.

"You are very fortunate," he said. "There are hundreds of Americans who have not yet been located. I can give you a safe-conduct to Barcelona. An American cruiser is expected there shortly, and you will be taken home."

"Thank God," cried Myron J. Butts. "Home—to God's own country! And we'll stay there, too. I never want to see these foreign murdering butchers again. America's good enough for me from now on."

And Jessop—Mortimer Jessop III, the wanderer, the expatriate, wondered why he did not resent this boisterous provincial flag-waving of the man.

The echo of the gypsy's song clung in his mind: "No truth more true than death—"

Suddenly, he hated that song.

The consul said to him, as they parted: "You've been about Spain for some years, haven't you, Mr. Jessop? I've heard of you, I think."

"Too long," said Jessop, slowly. "Much too long."

Another vivid story by Fulton Grant is scheduled for our next issue.

The Maintop

A duel to the death, high above the deck of an American frigate. . . . A long-to-be-remembered story by a writer new to these pages.

By WILL F. JENKINS

THE sea will some day give up its dead, and the past its secrets. Then Evan Holt will be tried by the final Court with all the evidence before It, raised from the sea-bottom to confront him. Bede may be held as an accessory; and he may—just possibly—plead for mercy. But Evan will sit quietly in his chair, his dark eyes steady, offering neither excuses nor defense. He will not even plead penitence, though he had time for penitence. . . . The thing happened when he was twenty-four—in 1836—and he lived for fifty years afterward. But there is no record that his sleep was ever troubled with dreaming. . . . Yet he must always have remembered each smallest detail of that night in the maintop. Especially, perhaps, he must have remembered how the moon-silvered deck of the frigate grew small as he climbed painfully upward. . . .

The moon hung low to westward, and the sky was full of stars. The sea seemed to expand as he climbed. It was a vast stretch of black, moon-speckled turbulence which reached ever farther toward an ever-retreating horizon. But he could not see all the ocean. Acres of moonlit canvas dazzled his eyes, with the darkened sides of yet other monster sails to seem blacker than black and heighten the sensitiveness of his eyeballs. Ropes stretched here and there, like knife-cuts across sails and sea alike. And of course his whole body was so definitely compounded of darting aches and agonies, that he could not turn to see the unquiet emptiness behind him.

It was the southeast trade which drove the frigate on; and it seemed like no such breeze as men elsewhere entrap to service. It was a steady, invisible force which varied not a breath in twenty-four hours. For days past, the frigate had forged ahead superbly. She was heeled over a little to starboard, as if in a negligent and stately courtesy. She moved steadily, irresistibly, over a moonlit tropic sea. She had been magnificent by day with every sail drawing. She was stupendous by night, moving ever onward and bearing five hundred men and many wide-mouthed cannon with no sound but the wind and the seas overside. She was the proudest of man's structures as well as the most deadly of his engines; and she was assuredly the most beautiful of all his creations. These things were true because she was a man-o'-war of 1836.

BUT to her beauty and her magnificence alike, Evan was oblivious. He had been flogged.

The trade-wind fluttered his shirt, and every movement of the coarse cloth tapped against the long and criss-crossed purple welts which stood in high relief upon his back. They stung and ached when he was still. Now, moving upward, at some phase of each movement the stirring plucked agony from the deep-bruised muscles of his back. Once he stopped to stare below, to see if Bede had started on his errand. Evan's left arm was outstretched. And at the movement of his neck, a scapular muscle seemed to glow white-hot. He caught his breath.

Then he went on doggedly. Halfway up, he made an oddly grim movement to his throat, where a sailor's clasp-knife hung by its lanyard. A dangerous weapon, a sailor's knife, in hands sufficiently resolute!

The maintop loomed near by. It was large—large enough to hold a dozen men luxuriously, and a good twenty for gam-

Etching by Yngve Edward Soderberg

She moved steadily over a moonlit tropic sea: magnificent by day, stupendous by night, moving ever onward and bearing five hundred men and many wide-mouthed cannon with no sound but the wind and the seas overside. . . . But to her beauty and her magnificence alike, Evan was oblivious. He had been flogged. . . . Some one was coming up toward him.

ming and spinning of yarns in times like these, when the huge ship crossed whole degrees of longitude without a yard braced or a rope tautened, with the beneficent trade behind her. The deck—and all the officers—was a hundred feet below, visible only through a maze of cordage and between monster bellying sails. But it was not directly below the maintop. The frigate bore west by north for the West Indies, and leaned to starboard in the trade-wind. A plug of tobacco dropped from the maintop, now, would not touch her deck at all. It would fall into the boiling black sea overside and never again be seen of men.

Evan groped for handholds by which to heave himself up. Below him, Bede nodded, and went soft-footedly away. Bede was Evan's friend. He moved about the deck to forward Evan's purpose. He had only to whisper certain words into another man's ear; but that was dangerous, because no one must hear them or notice that he spoke.

EVAN found solid footing in the darkness of the maintop. Faces turned his way. There were one—two—three men here aloft. "Who's here?" demanded Evan. "Stub? Jack? Nord? Who else?"

Grunts. Evan saw three of the four friends he had made on the frigate since he—together with four other survivors of the *Mary Louise's* wreck—had joined its company in Callao. He had been second mate of the *Mary Louise;* and five men in all had lived after her sinking. Stranded in Callao, they'd joined the frigate because there was no other plausible way of ever reaching home. In 1836 the consulates of the United States were not impassionedly solicitous of the welfare of common sailors—nor uncommon sailors either.

"None here but thy friends," rumbled Nord. Evan saw him, broad and flat-bodied, with his tarry pigtail reminiscent of more ancient days. "Friends all, Evan. You can damn Tom Deering at t' ease."

"I mean to do more than that," said Evan harshly. "I mean to kill him. Bede will send him aloft as soon as may be."

"Avast!" said Stubb, in some sternness. "If so be as you'd get even wi' the swab, wait till we go ashore. But a dozen lashes aint a thing to get hanged for, Evan! I've had 'em. Aye! An' there's ways o' gettin' back—"

Evan said coldly;

"Either he dies or I do. He's my foster-brother and knows I'll stand no floggings! Damn him! 'Tis his thought to drive me to mutiny, as he can with—" Evan's teeth clenched; then he went on: "With but twelve more lashes to my back as if I were a dog! I'll not stand flogging! By God, I'm neither slave nor hound, and the man who takes whip to me—"

"Stow it, lad," rumbled Nord kindly. " 'Tis discipline."

Evan swallowed.

"Harkee," he said steadily. "I mean to kill Tom Deering tonight. Partly for wrecking the *Mary Louise*—my ship. Partly for turning fancy man to drive me mad wi' the floggings he'd get me by lies. An' partly for another reason—"

"Happen it's a lass?" rumbled Nord. "A lass, now—"

"I'll not have it, Evan," said Stubb sternly. "I'm gun-captain, with extra pay due me. And I'll not be broke an' flogged an' maybe hanged to boot, because Tom Deering lied you into a lashing!"

"I ask no help," said Evan. "I'll gi' him a fair chance for his life. An' if he wins—"

Jack Hone heaved to his feet.

" My throat itches at t' thought of it," he said sourly. "I'm goin' below."

He moved toward the double ladders which led downward to the deck. But some one was coming up—some one moving briskly, lightly; some one scampering up to the maintop as the officers liked to see men scamper when an order was given. But no man had been ordered to the maintop now. In the moonlight and with the southeast trade thrusting smoothly onward, with the stars unobscured and blinking, and the frigate exactly upon her appointed course—no: no man came aloft on duty now.

Jack Hone growled. "Tom Deering hisself!" he said wrathfully.

He stood hesitant. Nord rumbled:

"Bide here, Jack. If swearin's needed, we swear together."

TOM DEERING appeared: His stiff, varnished seaman's hat, his head close-cropped, where more conservative seamen compromised between the traditional pigtail and the docked locks of landsmen.

Lightly he heaved himself up into the maintop, and stood in stark silhouette against the stars. He held himself with

a swagger, did Tom Deering, and yet not quite with a swagger. He seemed ready to dodge or cringe or overbearingly to boast, according as his company might suggest.

"Bede said som'one wanted me aloft," he said heartily. "Who was't?"

"I," said Evan harshly. "And you'll guess why."

UNEASILY Tom Deering teetered. There was no movement of the maintop, save the barest possible wavering as the frigate responded almost imperceptibly to long, low swells among the smaller seas, which had come rolling across uncounted leagues of ocean. It seemed that Tom Deering's eyes darted from one to another of the dark still figures regarding him. Reflected moonlight from the mizzen sails showed their outlines, and they were composed and quite at ease. But he could not make out whether their expressions were forbidding or no.

"Now, Evan," said Tom Deering, "I'm thinking we'd better have no talk. 'Tis true you were flogged, and on my evidence; but I could not lie when the captain asked me!"

"This flogging's but a part of it," said Evan grimly. "I'd talk to you, because I charge that you are resolved I shall not put foot on shore again. I charge you before our messmates here."

Tom Deering drew a quick breath. Then he laughed.

"That's quarrelsome an' abusive language," he observed; "an' so, contrary to the articles o' war."

"Aye! But harken!" said Evan in cold passion. "We were brothers when we were small. Not i' blood, thank God! But one woman mothered us through our childhood, and you were her own son and I was not. But it was me she begged to watch over you. You remember that! And you remember that when I caught you thieving from your own father, I slipped the stolen money back i' place, that none might know it but we two. And when you wronged that serving-wench, 'twas I wi' the money my father'd left me, that hired a man to marry the poor trollop lest your parents know what scum they had begotten!"

The standing man wavered. Then he laughed again.

"Harkee, mates, what poor Evan's telling to blast my good name! If there's one of us as hasn't had a wench bewailing him, it's a poor figure of a man he is!"

There was silence. Only silence. Tom Deering looked from one man to another, in the maintop, and it seemed that his figure took on the semblance of scorn. But his voice went a half-tone higher.

"Is't a pack o' parsons in the navy?" he demanded. "Did Bede toll me aloft to hear Evan spouting a pack o' lies to win him sympathy? Damn him, he was ever a sniveling fool! My parents took him in as a squalling beggar brat, and fed an' clothed him; an' by God, 'twas my own father made him second mate on the *Mary Louise*—his own ship! If he'll malign me now—why, be damned to him! I was mate when he was second on the *Mary Louise*. If we both be common sailors now, till we reach a home port, none the less I'll be skipper next time, while he—"

"You'll be no skipper," said Evan grimly. "I am witness you sank the *Mary Louise* to drown men who knew the skipper'd caught you thieving your father's gold-pieces—the price o' the cargo."

"You lie!"

Evan's hand went to the lanyard about his neck.

"Will you fight me for that, Tom Deering?" he asked coldly.

"Damme, no!" snarled the dark figure. "'Tis against the articles o' war. You ha' been triced to the gratings for a dozen lashes wi' the cat. But I'll not! Fighting's outlawed upon this ship. When we go ashore—"

Evan stood up.

"Only one of us will go ashore," he said more coldly still. "Because I'm neither slave nor hound, and ere I'll take another lashing, I'll jump overside—aye, and take captain or lieutenant or the bos'n with me! And you know it, Tom! You expected, damn you—what did you expect, when you lied me into today's flogging?"

IN triumphant savagery Tom Deering said:

"That you'd be a fool! An' I was wrong only in the time you'd choose for't! Because what you ha' said here an' now, with these mates for witnesses, is threats an' defiance o' discipline, an' talk o' mutiny to boot! An' Bede is privy to it. You'll be in the brig in ten minutes, an' at the gratings i' the morning for another flogging, if the cap'n doesn't hold 'ee for mutiny, court-martial and a hanging!"

He swung for the rope-ladder. But Evan said grimly:

"You'll not live to reach deck, Tom! Not if I ha' to leap down an' go overside with you! Stand!"

Tom Deering stopped short. Evan went on steadily:

"It was i' my mind to let things go on. We were foster-brothers, Tom. You've turned thief an' murderer, murdering our skipper an' enough of men in the sinking you brought about. I'd spare your father, and the woman who mothered us both, the finding out. Aye! And I shall. And there's Ellen. You'd marry her, Tom. 'Twould give you pleasure to make her suffer what things you could enforce. I'll spare her that, too. But I ha' cause of my own, too. Since I did not die in the wreck o' the *Mary Louise*, nor when you told that pack o' cutthroats in Callao that I'd the price of your father's cargo in a belt about my waist, instead of it being sunk with the ship as we'd reported, why—"

Tom Deering said thickly:

"You lie! You lie in your throat! The money was sunk! It was!"

Evan went on, unmoved:

"Because I did not die, you got me flogged, knowing I'd not stand it—as by God I won't!—and would end hanging at the yardarm. So I say to you, Tom, that but one of us goes down to the deck below."

Tom Deering's voice again rose in pitch.

"I'll not fight you! We'd but both be flogged—"

"Nay. Hanged," said Evan. "We fight wi' knives."

"I'll not—"

"But you will," said Evan softly. "I ha' a word for your ear. Hark to me now. I'll not touch you. I'll but whisper—"

He moved forward. Tom Deering half-turned in a terrible irresolution, moving to leap for the ladders. But Evan held his arms wide, smiling strangely. And the dazzling white sails aft cast a reflection which showed his icy, ironic smile. Tom Deering listened sullenly.

THE frigate moved on magnificently through the night. The southeast trade blew softly through her rigging. Her sails bellied out, their moonlit surfaces of dazzling whiteness, and their shadowed sides abysmal black. The sea writhed and coiled like seething ink toward the invisible edge of the world. Stars looked down. There was no sound anywhere except the humming of the wind moving past stays and cordage, past masts and yards and sails, and the softer hissing of waves washing by her sides. The men in the maintop watched as Evan whispered in his foster-brother's ear.

HE drew back. He had spoken a bare dozen words. And Tom Deering's body had become as the body of another man entirely. He shook all over. His eyes rolled in their sockets. His breath came in frightened gasps.

"I ha' told him of a thing I know," said Evan grimly. "He'll fight me. He dare not let me live, now. You lads look t' other way—"

"I'll not ha't," snapped Stubb. "Look you now, Evan, the fool may ha' done you harm; but I'm gun-captain—"

"An' it'd be coort-martial," rumbled Nord, "wi' floggin' to go on wi' till we get to port."

Jack Hone sniffed.

"We won't stand it, Evan! 'Tis a hangin' matter!"

"The one who loses, falls—yonder," said Evan grimly. He pointed straight down into the sea. "Mayhap both fall. And you lads know naught. We'll not be seen from the quarter-deck. We'll fight in the shadow of the sail. And presently one of us comes back, an'—t'other is missing at muster, and nobody knows what happened to him. If Tom kills me, he'll hold his tongue. And Bede will ne'er talk. He's loyal to Tom's father!"

Tom Deering whimpered. Then he swarmed desperately upward—reached the great yard just above the maintop. Evan followed. The two disappeared.

The three in the maintop stared, yet unbelieving. In the dense darkness of the sail's moon-shadow they were lost to sight. And here aloft the atmosphere of grandeur and of peace was so strong, that mortal combat seemed at least implausible. There were the acres of moonlit canvas, the graceful catenary shadows of stays, the stars which gazed blandly and incuriously down, the silvered deck which was cross-hatched and barred by fixed and unmoving shadows. In such an atmosphere the flash of knives and the panting breaths of battling men appeared unthinkable.

But from overhead Evan's voice came down, cold and warning:

"No outcry, Tom! 'Tis a hanging business for both, if either o' us makes a sound!"

Tom Deering cursed hysterically. Sheer blasphemy in a high-pitched tone.

Then his voice ceased suddenly. There was, instead, a sudden gasping sound. The three in the maintop stiffened in every muscle. They looked, and they listened with straining ears.

But though they may have heard more than Bede did, they saw no more. Bede stood beside one of the starboard carronades on the deck below. Thirty feet down the frigate's bulging side, the seas swept past. They were gleaming black, as of oil. Forward on the moon-streaked deck were other ominous shapes like the pot-bellied monster beside him. Aft, the looming mass of the quarterdeck.

But Bede looked upward. He saw the sails, all rounded silver light. Their expanse was unimaginable. The masts seemed to reach close to the stars, and the sails to be wings on which the ship might actually fly. There was an intricate tracery of cordage overhead.

BUT Bede saw none of these things consciously. He watched, with a passionate intensity, a darker blob among the graceful shapes aloft which was the maintop. Once he thought he saw an obscure movement, as of a figure climbing from it to the great lower yard of the maintopsail. An instant later he was sure he saw a second figure follow.

The trade-wind blew. Bede stared at the sail, straining his eyes. He watched its lower portion until his eyes ached. Then he saw a momentary bulging of its bottom part beyond the bellying caused by the wind. It seemed as if a figure had lurched against the yielding moonlit canvas from its darkened side. Bede stiffened, grew tense. There was another movement of the canvas. Something had struck it so violently that a wave moved across the wind-stretched cloth like a ripple in water. Bede caught his breath. There was a sudden, rounded protuberance just above the yard. It writhed and quivered. It was the size of two men's bodies. It moved as if two men fought to the death. There was no sound save the wash of waves and the humming of the trade-wind in the rigging.

Then, suddenly, a tiny rip appeared in the canvas far overhead. Bede's eyes glinted. Something sparkled. A hand, a fist projected through the sail. It held a knife. The hand and knife strained and fought to withdraw, while the canvas all about it was agitated horribly. Then hand and knife vanished together.

For minutes there was no movement anywhere. But suddenly Bede felt rather than saw that something dark came plunging downward from among the stars. It made no sound. It uttered no cry. It fell with swift acceleration toward the sea. There was a splashing noise which was only a little louder than the normal washing of the waves. The frigate went on through the moon-speckled turbulence which was the ocean. There was no tumult, no alarm. There was only peace, and the sound of the waves, and the humming of the trade-wind overhead.

Something black slipped down from the maintopsail yard. Bede waited, straining his eyes tensely upward. Then a figure came painfully down toward the deck. It was a dark figure, unidentifiable. Bede watched, and suddenly his hand went to the clasp-knife at his throat.

But Evan swung to the deck, in the manner of a man filled with many sharp pains and agonies.

Bede moved toward him and said under his breath:

"Evan—all went well?"

"Aye," said Evan grimly. "Now let us finish it."

They moved forward together—past the waist, past the foremast. Here the deck narrowed, and the black-painted guns no longer pointed directly abeam. Bede straddled out over the bulwark, clinging to the gun with writhing black water directly beneath him. He pulled out the tampion of the gun. It was a black plug inserted in the gun-muzzle to protect the bore from spray and moisture. He passed it back to Evan.

"I have it," said Evan grimly. "Now the rest."

Bede passed back a thick wallet. A clump of written papers, a bag which clinked. Evan took the lot of them. He returned the tampion, which Bede replaced. Then Bede returned inboard.

"NOW, Evan—what?"

"Watch!" said Evan. He opened the wallet, inspected its contents by the light of the moon, and tossed it overside. He tore the papers to bits, made a tight ball of them, and flung them forcibly, straight down. The ball came apart as it reached the water. The moonlight showed paper scraps dotting a wave-side as it swept astern. Evan made a gesture with the bag.

Bede caught his arm.

"Evan! 'Tis the price of all the *Mary Louise's* cargo!"

"Aye," said Evan, "I know't. But he reported it lost in the wreck. I cannot

return it without explaining that he was a thief. 'Twas his father's money he'd stolen—again. 'Tis a cheap price for my foster-father to pay for ignorance. I ha' worked hard to keep him and Tom's mother from learning what Tom turned out to be. Now I ha' killed him to keep them from learning. So this goes over-side too."

"But, Evan!" protested Bede. "A part o' the cargo was thine!"

"So 'twas," said Evan. "So part of this money is mine. Wherefore—"

He flung the bag in a wide arc. It splashed into the side of a wave and sank instantly. He brushed his hands.

"Now 'tis finished. I ha' gained nothing. But I ha' saved a man and woman much worse than the grief they'll feel when they hear Tom Deering was lost at sea. And there's a lass who'd ha' married him. I ha' saved her more than they."

Bede swallowed.

"I'll tell t'others of the *Mary Louise's* crew that they may shut their mouths."

"Aye," said Evan again. "And keep them shut, or I'll take a hand to them. Tomorrow, Tom Deering will be missing. He was lost at sea. 'Tis all any man will ever know. And I shall sleep well despite these welts upon my back. I ha' fretted over him for a long time. He was bound to bring grief to my foster-parents."

He moved away.

"Evan," said Bede. "Will—now will y' marry the lass?"

Evan shrugged.

"Nay. Why should I? A likely lass, but—"

He shrugged again and moved toward the hatchway which led, two decks down, to the gallery in which eighteen inches of space was allotted him in which to swing his hammock and to sleep. . . . And he slept. For the fifty years of life remaining to him, it is not recorded that he was ever troubled with dreaming. . . .

But some day the sea will give up its dead and the past its secrets. Then Evan Holt will be tried by a final Court with all the evidence before It, raised from the sea-bottom to confront him. Bede may be held as an accessory; and he may—just possibly—plead for mercy. But Evan will sit quietly in his chair, his dark eyes steady, offering neither excuses nor defense. He will not even plead penitence, though he had time for penitence.

Nobody, of course, knows what the Court will decide.

Patient

I WANT you to understand that I'm not blaming the boss for what happened. Old Bill Travers is as fine a man as ever swung a rope or took a dally round a saddle-horn. He is plumb easy-going in spite of forty years of being throwed by outlaw horses, being stomped by longhorn steers, sleeping out in the rain and being starved out by drouths.

There was the time, for instance, that Red Sanders told the new cook to put soda in the molasses barrel "to keep her from sloshing." The old man was right disgusted when the chuck-wagon pulled up at the ranch with molasses dripping from every wheel, and a locoed cook swearing that he would take Red's scalp; but he stood it patient-like. He just cussed a little when Tonto Byers locked a skunk in the henhouse before us boys moved the chickens to another barn one night. Why, he didn't even fire old Apache Brown, the horse-wrangler, when the old coot got drunk and kept us away from the ranch-house with an old .45-70 rifle for two days and nights, mistaking us for Indians on the warpath.

But all this took place before the boss' niece come to live on the ranch. It seems like her daddy, who was Bill's only brother, got tangled up in some machinery up in the mining country and came out second best—at least that's what they figured from what they found of him. Anyway, Bill sent for her.

Sary turned out to be a long, hame-headed gal with a lantern jaw and freckles like a brockle-faced cow, but seeing as old Bill wouldn't win no claiming race on looks hisself, he didn't have much complaint on that account. The trouble was that she was too particular.

Before the gal come, Bill used to shave once a month if he was going to town, take a bath once in a while in the summer, and change clothes when the ones he had on wore out too bad. Maybe, like she said, he ought to have opened the screen door when he sat in the kitchen and spit tobacco juice outside; and there's some that think a man ought to wash his dishes more than once a day, but I don't hold with no woman that bars a man from the kitchen complete and wants to make a plumb sissy out of him. After that woman come, she made

Bill

He'd stood a lot in his day, and had taken it ca'm; but when his niece invaded the ranch, he rebelled.

By
ERNEST H. SMITH

Illustrated by Henry Thiede

Bill wear socks, take off his clothes when he went to bed and use a spittoon like the one in the pool-hall at town. It was enough to break the spirit of any man. One of the first things she done was to move me and the rest of the punchers out to the bunk-house, which hadn't been used since old Bill bought the place. And we wasn't allowed to hang around the house except at meal-times.

Bill wasn't stingy with her. He bought her a whole new outfit of dresses and such, took her to every dance in the county, and praised her cooking and temper to all the unmarried punchers. He opined that she would make some man a fine wife, but there wasn't none of them showed no interest except a sheep-herder from over the hills, and an old trapper we call One-eyed Pete. Bill allowed he hadn't got low enough to welcome a sheep-herder into the family, and it turns out that Pete already has an Apache squaw over on the reservation that he is bound to, plumb legal, so it looked like Bill had a permanent job —until the tenderfoot come along.

This tenderfoot limped in to the ranch one day from somewhere and took right up with Sary's cooking. He was a kind of a timid little guy and stuck pretty close to the ranch-house and Sary after the boys obligingly told him about the rattlesnakes, the tarantulas, the hydrophoby skunks and the wolves that prey especial on tenderfeet.

Right after Bill started wearing his six-shooter, scowling from under his eyebrows and muttering to hisself, Harry—that was this fellow's name—admitted bashful-like that him and Sary was going to get married. Maybe it was a case of love at first sight; but Apache, who was standing right close to Bill during one of his mumbling spells, swears that he was muttering: "There aint no heartless brute a-goin' to come triflin' round my pore li'l innocent gal, a-breakin' her heart an' leavin' her," and that he was mumbling loud enough so Harry might of heard him.

Anyway, the night of the engagement announcement, so to speak, Bill leaves the happy couple at the house a-courting, and comes down to the bunk-house.

"I know," he says, "that keepin' a bunch of cowpunchers from raggin' a tenderfoot is like tryin' to keep a bull pup from chasin' an alley cat. But Harry is kinda nervous-like and scary. Not doubtin' the boy none, he might get stampeded plumb off the range if you fellers aint careful. Course I don't begrudge you boys no harmless fun, nor the windy tales you tell 'im, but I don't aim to hev a bunch of hare-brained saddle bums, sech as you-all be, bust up no innocent buddin' romance an' tear no achin' heart-strings."

Course we promised to handle the tenderfoot gentle.

CONSIDERING that Harry started bunking out in the bunk-house and hanging round the corrals half the time tempting fate, the boys done real good. Some way he did get a cholla cactus under his saddle-blanket one day when Red saddled him a gentle horse to ride, and another time I caught Tonto drowning out some lizards from a hole, which don't look promising. Having heard of people finding lizards and such in their bed-rolls at night, and Tonto looking kind of em-

barrassed and hurrying away, I figured he wasn't making no scientific study of reptyles.

Things was drifting along smooth when Jess Akers, who's the county sheriff, stopped at the ranch for supper late one evening and told us that he was trailing Juan Lopez, a border cattle-rustler and sneak-thief who had crossed the line with a couple of his pals and run off a herd of whitefaces from a ranch some twenty miles northeast of us.

"Who is this—er—Juan Lopez?" the tenderfoot asks, kind of pop-eyed, after the Sheriff has left.

Seeing that Bill has rode off a piece with the Sheriff, Tonto explains. According to Tonto, Juan was a cross between Billy the Kid, Pancho Villa and an Apache Indian. He burned ranches, stole cattle, tortured his victims and was particular fond of murdering tenderfeet.

Apache, catching some of this spirit of innocent fun, puts in that Juan is especial mad at our outfit, seeing as how we drove him off one time when he had raided a country schoolhouse and was preparing to hang the school-marm and butcher all the kids. If Juan, who had never done nothing worse than run off a few head of dogies and rustled a horse once in a while, had heard the boost the boys was making for him, his chest would have riz up in pride.

About that time Bill rides back looking kind of suspicious, and the boys amble on down to the bunk-house, leaving me and him on the porch talking about the line-up for next day; and Harry goes in where Sary is.

THE boys was setting around kind of hopeful and quiet when I come back to the bunk-house. Tonto, seeming to be the elected ramrod, clears his throat.

"Us boys has been thinkin'," he explains mild-like, "that they wouldn't be no harm in havin' a little surprise party for Harry when he comes in tonight. Special since ol' Juan Lopez is on the prod."

I catch on immediate.

"We don't aim to hurt him none a-tall," puts in Apache before I can object. "We'll just hog-tie him up, put a sack over his head an' make like ol' Juan is torturin' the rest of us boys previous to 'tendin' to him. Course when he finds out it was all a joke, he'll be plumb relieved an' won't hold no hard feelin's."

"Bill, hisself, sez they aint no harm in innocent fun," Red reminds.

I studies it over kind of worried for a while, but seeing as how we didn't aim to hurt Harry none, and was going to explain the joke to him afterward, I couldn't see nothing real harmful in it. Fact is, I figured it might cure the tenderfoot of being so scary.

"Just how are you going to work it?" I asks.

"We won't light the lamp," explains Tonto; "an' when we hear him comin', we'll go in an' git ready for him. Soon as he comes in, an' 'fore he has a chancet to strike a match, Red here will grab him by the laigs. You grab his arms and hold 'em, an' I'll slap a flour-sack over his haid. Apache'll hold the door in case he was to slip by somehow."

"All us fellers knows a little Mex," adds Apache, "so we'll make her more real by talkin' Mex."

WE sat around in the dark planning the fun until we hear Harry coming up the trail whistling to hisself, and then we gets to our places. Pretty soon he moseys up to the door, pushes it open and walks in kind of careful.

The door slams behind him.

"Caramba!" yells Tonto, and I feel him lunge past me.

"Hot tamale," hollers Red, plumb bloodthirsty.

I reach out to pin the tenderfoot's arms, but some puncher grabs me around the legs about the same time, and a mule or something kicks me in the head. Things was kind of fading-like for a while, but I could hear the boys a-stomping and a-grunting round, and somebody a-screeching like a cage full of wildcats.

"Chili con carne!" somebody starts to squall, and it ends off like a cow what has got bogged in a mud-hole.

"Don't kill him," I starts to holler, but some careless puncher sticks a boot-heel in my mouth about that time, and before I can get my breath, the door flies open and somebody stampedes acrost country a-wearing the screen door,—which he has forgot to open,—like a neck-yoke; but it don't seem to hinder his speed none.

Somehow I manage to strike a match and light the lamp, and the first thing I see is that the house is going to need some carpenter work done on it. Tonto Byers, who has been lying kind of peaceful-like and careless draped over a bunk in the corner, begins to squirm around, jumps to his feet and starts to resume the fight until I explain that the opposing army has done left.

Red is leaning on the table looking right discouraged, and feeling of a spot on his head where it looks like his hair has been parted permanent. It looks like poor old Apache has vanished entire, until he staggers out from under a bunk, clawing the air and yelling: "Somebody take this ding-danged, blinkety-blank sack offen my haid." Only he don't say ding-danged nor blinkety-blank.

"We aint goin' to hurt him none," says Red sarcastic, and looking at Tonto.

"Him?" yells Tonto. "There never was no one man that could fight, scratch, bite an' kick that much, at the same time squallin' that loud."

"Mebbe it was ol' Juan hisself," volunteers Apache; but we all know that Juan is probably a hundred miles down in Mexico by this time. No, there's no doubt it was Harry we corralled, but we can't figure no house-cat turning into no catamount so sudden.

Sizing up the situation after we calmed down some, we started to realize that facing old Bill, if we did, wasn't going to be no Sunday-school picnic. Here was Harry, chances was, plumb scared out of the country and maybe still running. Red wanted to start to town immediately on foot, but Apache was in favor of stealing some horses and hitting for south of the border. Finally we agreed to ask the boss for our pay, and promise never to show up in the county again—meanwhile being ready to run.

Next morning we was just fixing to cut high card to see who went after the pay, when we see Bill coming to the bunk-house.

"You're the foreman on this ranch an' ought to do the talkin'," these cow-chasers observe, and they push me out the door before I have time to argue the question.

"When did you have all them front teeth pulled?" Bill inquires, friendly-like.

I hear a snigger, and the boys files out, seeing that the boss don't show no signs of violence.

"I see you-all been drunk again," says Bill, real patient, eying the assortment of black eyes, busted beaks and fractures. "Well, boys will be boys!" he sighs.

"Come on up to the house," he says; "an' after we've et, you can move your things up there again."

"BUT, Sary—" I commence, flabbergasted.

Bill sighed. "Sary and Harry took the chuck-wagon fore sunup this mornin' an' drove into town to git married, after he comes in all excited last night an' wanted to leave *pronto*. He's catchin' a train in town, an' takin' her back to his folks on the farm, 'cause he don't allow that this is no safe place for women-folks, 'count of reptyles an' desperadoes."

Soon as breakfast was over, we was sitting around in front of the stove real comfortable just like old times.

"I wonder," says Apache, holding a piece of raw beefsteak up against a swole-up eye, and looking at old Bill as innocent as a week-old calf that has lost his mammy, "what made Harry decide to leave so sudden-like."

"I dunno," says Bill, shifting his feet to an easier place on the table, and spitting kind of contented-like into the open stove. "Somehow he was kinda nervous about Juan Lopez last night 'fore he left for the bunk-house, so I told him to be awful careful, and give him a piece of lead pipe to defend hisself with just in case he was attackted."

ARMS and MEN

By H. BEDFORD-JONES

Illustrated in lithograph by Peter Kuhlhoff

IT was a little scrap of heavy silk, with traces of thick varnish on one side. I examined it curiously and asked Burnside what it was.

"Product of the silkworm," said he caustically, "—and the first company of aviators in history."

"So! A fragment of the earliest airplane?" I asked, and he regarded me in withering scorn and silence for a long moment.

Martin Burnside, who collects arms and armor, cares only for the most significant pieces. His brains and money and life have been devoted to this hobby. Although we are friends of many years' standing, or perhaps because of this fact, our discussions are apt to verge upon the acrimonious.

"For any person of alleged intelligence, such a question is rank folly!" he exclaimed at length. He hemmed and hawed for a space, and then came out with an amazing confession.

"I don't know what it is, to tell the exact truth. I just got it from Dr. Chase in Paris. He said merely that it belonged in my collection because it had come from the famous *Entreprenant*, and was made by the first company of aviators in history. What it means, I haven't the faintest idea. I know little of the history of aviation."

"The *Entreprenant!*" I exclaimed in a low voice.

He lifted his shaggy brows.

"You know what it is or was?"

"Of course." I seized on the chance to hammer him. "Any fool knows that."

"You're not the average fool; you're below par," he calmly shot back. "However, here is a certificate that came with the thing, signed by some one named Robertson. Take it along, and if you dig up a story about it, or any earthly reason why this bit of silk should figure in my collection of arms and armor, I'll appreciate it. This certificate, by the way, is dated 1811. Thus, the silk can't come from any military balloon."

"Why not?" I asked him.

"Because," he rejoined acidly, "the first balloon actually used in warfare was that employed by the Army of the Potomac during the Civil War. This is a well-known fact. The French projected

XXII—The First Air Scout

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the use of balloons in Algeria, in 1830, and in Italy during the '50's, but they were not put into service."

I regarded him with unholy glee.

"Then," I said, "you are not aware that Napoleon took a corps of military balloonists to Egypt with him?"

"You can't prove it!" he snapped. "It isn't so."

"I can prove it by half a dozen words on the Egyptian campaign," I retorted joyously. "However, that has nothing to do with this fragment of silk. I'll take it along, gladly, and will dig out the story—on condition that you give me half the piece of silk."

"What for?" he growled suspiciously. "You collect stamps, not weapons."

"For my collection of air mail and aviation souvenirs, of course."

"Done," he agreed with a sniff. Martin Burnside was distinctly not air-minded.

I took the stuff home rather excitedly, I admit. There I dug into my albums of old letters and autographs for the item I wanted. This was an old fragment of document, which I had never compre-

hended; I did not understand it now, but I had a dim idea about it. . . .

It was the coarse, thick paper used by officials of the first French Republic. On one side was part of some official order signed by Saint Just, having to do with forage for an army. On the other was a brief, hastily scrawled notation, dated "8th Messidor, 16 h.30,"—or four-thirty P.M.,—signed by one Beauchamp. The whole thing had never made any sense. I had kept it because it bore the signature of the famous Saint Just.

NOW, as things do in the queer way of the human brain, details fell into place. I went through books, documents, memoirs, and the puzzle-picture took shape and coherence. The bloody figure of Saint Just took form; that of Beauchamp emerged from the shadows of the past, growing ever larger and clearer before me.

A queer collection of heroes, this army of the Sambre et Meuse, fighting in Belgium against half Europe, in the year 1794. Men poorly armed, ill equipped, half naked at times, barefoot, monstrously outnumbered, but superbly led by Jourdan, the great shining general of the Revolution. Men of all ranks and kinds: Aristocrats who had genuinely embraced the cause of the Republic; other aristocrats who had fled the guillotine in Paris and hidden themselves in the army; wild, fervid republicans who believed fanatically in liberty, equality and fraternity. But all fought like heroes for France, beating back the Austrian wave.

Beauchamp was young, ardent, in peril of his neck. Not a soul knew that in reality he was the Baron de Selle de Beauchamp, on the list of proscribed in Paris, an aristocrat for whom the guillotine thirsted.

Here, in the camp before Maubeuge in this summer of 1794, he was a simple private in the ranks of the first company of aviators, a new arm of the service created by a decree of April 2nd—twenty-six men, seven officers, and a balloon, the *Entreprenant*. Made by Dr. Coutelle, now captain in command of this new arm, coated by him with a varnish which allowed it to keep its hydrogen inflation for weeks (a varnish of which the secret died with the worthy physician), this balloon was now assisting at the defense of Maubeuge. And Beauchamp, in his special aviation uniform of blue with red facings, his identity as an aristocrat unsuspected, was safe.

Here in Maubeuge he had assisted Dr. Coutelle to construct the furnace and apparatus which, by a new process, produced the hydrogen gas. The balloon arrived, was inflated, was set to work. Twice a day Coutelle, with Jourdan himself, made ascents to inspect the Austrian lines and trenches, communicating with the ground by means of wigwag flags, while soldiers held the lines of the balloon.

With evening, Beauchamp stole away from quarters. Hair unkempt, mustache grown, he sought out the barracks of the Ninety-third of the line, and the *vivandière* of that stoutly republican regiment.

As much a part of each regiment as its officers or sergeant-major, the *vivandière* followed the camp, shared in battles or victories, supplied the men with cognac, the wounded with the tender attention of a woman. This *viviandière* of the Ninety-third was wilder and fiercer than others of her kind. She was young; it was her first campaign. Wild ringlets of dark hair framed dark, thin features and burning eyes. *"Death to Aristocrats!"* The words were on her lips night and day. Like precious treasures which she displayed to her soldiers, she carried a kerchief discolored with the blood of Louis Capet, a blood-draggled lock of hair from the fallen head of Marie Antoinette. The catchwords of the Revolution rang in her fierce harangues, she led the "Ça Ira" and other chants of the Revolution when the men marched. Her hands were rough, her nails black.

BUT at night, in the shadows under the walls, beside a bivouac fire, or in some dark angle of the shell-torn streets, it was a different person who walked and talked low-voiced with Beauchamp. A girl invisible, of tender grave voice, of desperate, heart-hurried resolves, of strange information.

"No, dear Jean, we no longer exist. The De Courceys—you remember them?—have been denounced; by this time they are dead. The Marquise des Sceaux was guillotined last week. Her son is in the Seventy-first; I must tell him. Now that she is dead, he can desert and seek safety among the Austrians. And with every day the terror comes closer to us all. They are going through the army lists now for the names of aristocrats. I have seven officers to warn—"

"It is madness, Louise!" the young man broke out frantically. "For the last time, listen to me. If it's discovered that

"It is ordered," said Saint Just, "that you arrest Citizen Beauchamp . . . as a traitor."

you're really Louise de Petin, daughter of the Comte de Petin, you know what'll happen. You may be recognized any day."

She laughed bitterly. "I defy anyone to recognize the girl that was, in the woman that is! No, my dear, cease argument. You serve the Republic; you believe in it; but I hate it with all my soul. And you, who serve it, are not safe. I've warned you that the Baron de Selle de Beauchamp is on the death-list. The Republic you serve seeks to murder you."

"Not the Republic; a few like Robespierre and Saint Just, who rule Paris," said the young man. "It is France that I serve. Like Thiebault and others—"

She caught his arm. "Warn him if you get a chance! He is on the latest list."

"Thiebault? Impossible! He's on the staff—"

"I tell you, he's on the list!" she exclaimed. "And something more. Saint Just himself, that monster, that unspeakable assassin, is coming as commissioner to the army—commissioner, with power of life and death over every man from General Jourdan to the lowliest teamster! He intends to weed out every aristocrat in the army. He is on the way from Paris now."

Beauchamp swallowed. "Saint Just! But I knew him well in the old days."

"As did I. Aristocrat of the aristocrats, hurling himself into the Revolution, intoxicated with blood; remorseless, terrible, fanatical. Saint Just, who sent Danton to the scaffold, who would murder his best friend without a qualm!"

"Who fought like a hero with the armies on the Rhine," said Beauchamp gloomily. "Who stopped the executions at Strassburg and exposed corruption—"

"Who is the intimate of the bloody Robespierre!" she broke in. "And you talk of love between us? That has no future, Jean. We go our own way; we serve as best we may. We, who were children together, can still trust one another. At least, our hearts are clean, our service is sincere. And beware! If Saint Just recognizes you, then you're a lost man."

Beauchamp laughed. "Nonsense! He'll never clap eyes on a poor private of the aviation like me! Forget him. I heard the general say today that the Austrians are giving up the siege. He is going directly to Charleroi, in that case, and press the siege of that city; our corps will go with him. If we're parted—"

"We no longer exist, I tell you," she said sadly. "Warn Thiebault, I conjure you! I cannot go near headquarters. You must do it tonight. Good-by, my dear."

Saint Just

For a moment Beauchamp felt her lips touch his own, a touch cold as death that left a shiver in his soul. Then she was gone in the obscurity.

A cry of despair, of tortured agony, broke from him. He pursued her blindly, found the search useless, and turned heavily toward headquarters. At least, he could do her errand of mercy; it was no treason to warn brave men against arrest and murder.

An inquiry from a headquarters sentry was easy; the company of aviators and their balloon were posted close by. He turned to the quarters of the general, stuffed his clay pipe and lit it, and puffed in the street until a tall figure came out in the starlight. He spoke, softly.

"Thiebault!"

THE staff officer halted, then came toward him. Beauchamp removed his hat. The other, who knew him well, recognized him at once.

"A warning," said Beauchamp under his breath. "You're on the list for arrest. Your one chance is to get away."

"Good; I've expected it," was the quiet answer. "Thanks, my friend. I leave at once. Tomorrow."

"For the frontier?"

"No! For Paris." Thiebault laughed a little. "When these assassins and murderers are dead, I shall still be serving France. Adieu; thank you again."

His prophecy was correct; twenty years later he was leading an army, for France.

Beauchamp sought his own quarters. Here at least he was safe from the spies who riddled the army. Few who had ever known him would recognize him now—unless like Thiebault and other aristocrats, they were in the secret, and in his own shoes. Here, one of twenty-six men and seven officers of a special corps, he had nothing to fear.

NEXT day he made his first ascension. Captain Coutelle had noticed that he was a man of intelligence, of education, and drew him aside. The worthy physician minced no words.

"Beauchamp, I've marked you for promotion. I ask no questions about your past; I don't give a hang if you're an aristocrat or an ex-convict! You go up with me today and manage the signals. A second aviation company is to be formed, I understand. I'm putting you down as a lieutenant. Enough said."

So, with the signal-flags ready, he climbed into the car of the balloon beside Coutelle. The order was given. The earth dropped away from them.

Two ropes held the balloon; at the ground these became a dozen, which were held by the rest of the company. Up and up the shimmering gauzy bag drifted, until it was twelve hundred feet in the air, above the fortifications.

Coutelle, through a glass, observed the Austrian lines beyond the walls. At his commands, Beauchamp signaled with the flags to the officers below; the code, which Coutelle had drawn up, was simple but sufficient. Suddenly the captain addressed his subordinate, with the cold, calm precision of a surgeon at an operation.

"Hold, Beauchamp! This is interesting. I believe they are about to fire upon us—yes! They have emplaced a fresh battery just opposite. Two cannon! I can see activity; an officer is aiming. The cannon are quite close, in a covered road that is sheltered from our view down below. Ah! They are about to fire."

Beauchamp laughed and stared at the enemy lines. "If they hit us—"

"A valuable experiment. Let us await it, by all means!"

"What the devil!" exclaimed Beauchamp. "I don't share your curiosity."

A puff of smoke, a new voice in the exchange of fire; they could distinctly see the ball passing just overhead. The second cannon crashed out. Beauchamp cried a warning. No use! There was a

shock that almost flung them from their feet.

"*Vive la République!*" shouted the Captain in delight. "It barely touched the bottom of the basket, Beauchamp! Come, we know exactly where the battery is located. Signal to haul us down and we'll have the guns turned on them."

"With all my heart," said Beauchamp, and signaled.

Coutelle, who believed implicitly in this arm of the service he had created, was overjoyed. The balloon was recognized; the war in the air was opened; the first shot had been fired upon the company of aviation! But Beauchamp cursed the eager curiosity of the scientist-soldier.

It was almost the last shot from the Austrian batteries; that night the enveloping army began its withdrawal. Dispatches reached General Jourdan. The entire Austrian army under the Prince of Coburg was concentrated at Fleurus, near Charleroi, which the French were trying desperately to capture.

Jourdan rushed off; his last act was to order Coutelle to bring up the *Entreprenant* to Charleroi, with all possible speed —and to bring the balloon inflated. There was no way to inflate it at Charleroi, no time to install furnaces and apparatus; it was needed instantly, for its value was enormous. And at Fleurus would come the battle which would save France—or destroy the Republic.

Coutelle called the company together. The town was in mad confusion; regiments were on the march, every available man called up to the concentration.

"The balloon, inflated, to Charleroi," said the perplexed Coutelle. "How the devil are we to transport an inflated bag for thirty-five miles? I ask for suggestions."

"Load it aboard a wagon," some one said.

Beauchamp laughed out. "Let the *Entreprenant* transport itself! What better? Company, march! All hands to the ropes. Tow the bag in the air, no less. Why not?"

WHY not, indeed? The roads were blocked. Tow the bag above the roads, then, the men marching on either side. Why not?

Enthusiasm, wild acclaim! During the night Coutelle had a score of ropes firmly affixed to the balloon. At the crack of dawn the first company of aviators was off.

Getting outside the town was a problem; passing the enemy outposts, still close at hand, was another problem. All safely behind, the morning waxed into a day of the most terrific heat imaginable, but fortunately the little wind there was came from a favorable direction. The road was crowded with cavalry, with artillery. Twenty feet above the amazed, laughing, cheering soldiery floated the balloon, drifting over their heads, while the company marched with the ropes on either hand.

The heat increased. A blistering summer's day. Worse, the air was filled with soot and coal-dust from the mines near Charleroi. Stripped to the waist, fighting the occasional gusts of wind that tore at the bag, black as devils with the coal-dust, the company marched on. In the basket rode Coutelle, taking notes with calm and curious interest.

FIFTEEN hours of it, with only the briefest of pauses. Even the slogging infantry had regular two-hour halts, but not the company of aviators. Fifteen hours of it, and then Charleroi; and, to their amazement, the whole army turned out to welcome them, trumpets and drums blaring and pounding, a regimental band playing in their honor, and quarters awaiting them at a farm outside Charleroi.

And the company, despite its staggering march, did its part. In the sunset, an ascension was made, without a moment's delay.

Next day Coutelle took General Morelot up with him, Beauchamp signaling. The day was spent in the air—ten hours, at least. And on the following day, thanks to the information gained, Charleroi surrendered.

Rest? Devil a bit of it! Charleroi was in French hands, but Coburg was already coming up, ignorant of the city's fall, with the whole Austrian army. The cannon were already thundering. The company of aviators, with the *Entreprenant*, were moved up that same night to headquarters, farther outside town. And there the battle was joined—the battle to decide the fate of France. For not the Austrians alone were here, but all the allies leagued to conquer the Republic.

Sunrise, and the thunder of guns. In five columns the allied army drove down at Charleroi; under the rumble of caissons, the tramp of infantry, the charge of entire cavalry divisions, the earth shook and trembled. A hundred and twenty-

five thousand men were engaged, hand to hand, in a struggle of unrivaled ferocity and savage resolve. Coburg had made the most minute preparations to destroy the whole French army. His orders given, nothing could stop his columns except death. Villages were put to the torch; the vast fields of corn flamed; a haze of gray smoke covered the whole countryside.

TWELVE hundred feet above this haze hung the *Entreprenant*, with General Morelot observing, and Coutelle himself doing the signaling. On the ground Beauchamp received and answered the signals; beside him was Lieutenant Delaunay of the company. A few feet away stood Jourdan and a young man of twenty-six. In the background waited the staff officers and aides, and the company of aviators who held the balloon ropes.

"But where is our artillery?" demanded the young man with Jourdan. "It is hardly engaged, General."

"It is waiting," replied General Jourdan grimly. Even to the all-powerful Saint Just, member of the Committee of Public Safety, this man did not explain himself.

Beauchamp, a streak of dirt across his cheek to aid his escape from recognition, performed his work mechanically. With each shift of the enemy columns, word came down, was repeated to Jourdan; an aide went galloping out with consequent orders. Officers came and went. Every nerve of this immense army was in control of the calm, grim general in whose hands rested the fate of the Republic.

To Saint Just, this seeming inactivity was terrible. How long? All day, Jourdan had replied; perhaps all night, perhaps next day.

He was not imposing, this young Saint Just. He was handsome; his countenance had something sweet and tender in its expression when at rest. It was hard to conceive that he was an actual monster of inhumanity. He frowned slightly as Jourdan, plunged in reports and studying the map in his hand, quite ignored him.

He turned to Lieutenant Delaunay.

"Citizen Lieutenant, can you spare me a man—one of intelligence?" he asked. "Preferably one who can write."

"Certainly, Citizen Commissioner." Delaunay called to his companion officer. "Citizen L'Homond! Will you relieve Citizen Beauchamp? And you, Beauchamp, will place yourself at the disposal of the Citizen Commissioner." He saluted Saint Just briskly. "One of our ablest men."

Saint Just inclined his head slightly, and fastened his grave, melancholy gaze on Beauchamp. The latter, staggered by this sudden blow of destiny, turned over his flags to L'Homond, came to Saint Just, and saluted him in silence. For a moment the eyes of the two men met and held. Then Saint Just smiled.

"You have writing-materials, citizen? Naturally, not. Come to one side with me, and let us be comfortable. Here is my portfolio; while the army does its work, I shall do mine."

They moved together to a patch of shade at one side, sat down, and Saint Just opened his portfolio, a traveling-case of papers and writing-materials. He gave Beauchamp a quill and inkpot, then took some official papers and tore them in two.

"Use the reverse side, which is blank; unhappily, paper has become a luxury."

Taking up a number of papers, he ran through them and seemed lost in meditation. A cannon-ball smashed and shivered the leafage overhead, scattering them with twigs. Saint Just shook them off.

"What shall I write?" Beauchamp asked. His mouth was dry. Sweat, not induced by the hot sun, bedewed his forehead.

"To the colonel commanding the Ninety-third of the line. It is ordered that you arrest and send to Paris, under guard, the *vivandière* of your regiment, one named Margot. She has been denounced as an aristocrat, Louise de Petin, who is serving as a spy and an agent of the enemy."

Drops of sweat ran down the face of Beauchamp as he wrote. Hours had passed; noon was approaching. It was not the noonday heat that prompted his agitation, however.

"ORDERS," went on the calm, inflexible voice. To officer after officer, orders commanded arrests; arrests of men and officers, who were on the list of proscribed.

It took a long time, this work.

"The last," said Saint Just with a sigh of relief. "To the captain commanding the first company of aviators! It is ordered that you arrest Citizen Beauchamp of your company, formerly the Baron de Selle de Beauchamp, who is to be sent to Paris for trial as a spy and traitor."

"Jean, the Republic you serve seeks to murder you!"

Beauchamp wrote on. Suddenly balls whistled around; several of them struck the ground, flinging dirt over his paper. Cries from the men holding the balloon-ropes announced that some were hit.

"The enemy saves us the trouble of sanding the ink," said Saint Just calmly, and took the written orders. He took the quill from Beauchamp's hand and signed the torn sheets of paper, one after the other.

Then he calmly laid down the quill.

"I see," Beauchamp said in a low voice, "that the stories told of you are true, Saint Just."

The deep, grave eyes met his angry gaze.

"All the stories told of me are true," said the Commissioner calmly. "It is my business to see that they are true, citizen."

"'Citizen' be damned!" snapped Beauchamp. "Why this comedy, Antoine? Why all this pretense? Does it please you to torture those who were once your friends?"

"Perhaps it does, Jean." Saint Just produced a shell snuffbox and with great care imbibed a pinch of the brown dust. A slight smile touched his thin, mobile lips.

"These men whom you sentence to death," went on Beauchamp, "are out there under that haze of smoke and dust, fighting for France, dying for France. This woman whom you have ordered arrested is one whom you knew well in other days."

"In days when I was a poet and not a politician." And Saint Just really smiled at this. "True, Jean. As I knew you! But, before the good of the Republic, friendship does not exist. Love does not exist. I might have married that woman, had she not loved you."

Beauchamp went white.

"This, then, is your revenge!" he said hoarsely. "Because she loved me and I loved her—this is your revenge."

"Precisely," assented the other calmly. "But you are mistaken in recalling to me a friendship which no longer exists, citizen. I do not know you, except as a man who is acting as my secretary."

Beauchamp frowned. "What do you mean by that?"

"What I say."

Saint Just checked himself and looked up. An officer of the staff was coming to them hurriedly, a blood-stained bandage about his head, agitation evident in his mien.

"Citizen Commissioner!" the man exclaimed. "Bad news. The left wing is broken; the corps are falling back, but in good order. The center is retreating. The balloon has just signaled that the right is shattered and in full flight. The Austrians have taken Fleurus, and their columns are advancing on Charleroi. The Citizen General advises that you retire at once under my guidance, to a place of safety."

"It is defeat?" queried Saint Just, turning pale.

"So it seems, Citizen Commissioner."

"General Jourdan is retiring from this spot, then?"

"No," said the aide. "The Citizen General remains here."

"So do I," said Saint Just. "Kindly tell him so."

There was a moment of silence, as the aide departed. Beauchamp well knew what this news meant: disaster. He spoke out in bitter accents.

"You are somewhat previous with your arrests, Citizen Commissioner. It seems that most of those whom you hope to send to the guillotine are to die here."

Saint Just was very pale. The words of an officer reached them, as he called out to others of the staff:

"*Mon Dieu,* the entire right wing is shattered! It's a rout; the divisions of the Ardennes have become but a wild mob—"

"France is lost." The low, rich voice of Saint Just trembled, vibrated with deep emotion. "The France for which you and I alike have worked and fought, is lost. This day, the Republic dies. Well, Citizen Beauchamp, I have done my duty. I have issued my orders. I leave them in your hands."

BEAUCHAMP took the sheaf of papers that were now signed.

"In my hands?" he repeated, staring at Saint Just.

"Certainly. As Commissioner, I instruct you to see that they are delivered."

"To perfect your vengeance, even in the moment of disaster?" sneered Beauchamp.

The eyes of Saint Just regarded him steadily: luminous dark eyes, alight with strange inner fires.

"To perfect my vengeance, as you express it—yes," came the reply. Suddenly that pallid, almost gentle countenance broke. For an instant Beauchamp had one amazing glimpse of the inner man, a man tortured and all in agony. "Oh, you blind fool! Are you such a child? The Commissioner of Public Safety gives these orders of arrest to a soldier to deliver. Does Antoine Saint Just care a damn what Jean de Beauchamp does with them? Damnation! Have you no brains at all? My vengeance, you say—"

Saint Just's words died upon an oath. He sprang up, folded his portfolio, and strode away to rejoin the General and the staff.

Beauchamp sat absolutely stunned before the realization of those words, before the one glimpse given him into the soul of this supposed monster, this implacable man of iron—this aforetime poet.

In his hands, yes. Vengeance—yes! The vengeance of a high and noble spirit. In his hands, to deliver or to destroy. The Commissioner had done his duty. If victory came, these men, and this one woman, might be warned and saved; if disaster came, as now seemed certain, nothing would matter.

"ANTOINE!"

With the strangled cry, Beauchamp leaped to his feet. He wanted to utter frantic apology, words of comprehension; but Saint Just merely glanced back at him, shrugged, and went on. The chance was lost.

A man came panting. "Citizen Beauchamp! You are needed at once. L'Homond is wounded—"

Beauchamp tucked the forgotten inkpot and quill into his pocket, thrust away the sheaf of arrest orders, hurried back to his flags. Aides and staff officers seethed around. Reports were more and more terrible. General Jourdan came closer, to get the news from aloft the instant it was signaled. Beauchamp heard him reply calmly to a question from Saint Just:

"Kleber is trying to rally the left and hold firm. I have no reserves remaining; they have all been flung into the center and right. The attacks there are frightful."

"But the road is open to Charleroi, then!"

"Exactly," said Jourdan quietly. "The Austrian columns are uniting, are breaking our center, advancing." He turned

to the lieutenant beside Beauchamp. "Send me word instantly their columns reach Charleroi—instantly!"

He moved away with Saint Just, joined the staff, and sought the shade of the trees near by for a moment of relaxation and a bite of food, the first since morning. Bread and wine arrived. Beauchamp bolted his share, kept on with his work. From the balloon, Coutelle was signaling constantly—news that became worse and worse.

Prisoners were brought in for examination by Jourdan. They stood around, these Dutch and Austrian and German officers, gaping at the balloon and those serving it. They did not spare predictions, those who could speak French.

"You'll be hanged to your own ropes, you sorcerers! The orders have been given. Spies, that's what you are!"

Some shook their fists at the balloon. Wild Moldavians and Hungarians stared up, then fell on their knees in fear. Beauchamp was grimly amused by the whole scene. And in his pocket the sheaf of orders burned. In his heart, the words of Saint Just burned. In his hands—to destroy, to warn, to save!

He, and he alone, was given to know that behind this carefully simulated mask of monstrous inhumanity, Saint Just was a man.

A groan broke from Lieutenant Delaunay, reading the message even as Beauchamp received it and signaled assent. The whole line was in retreat. On the right, batteries of artillery were mingled with cavalry and mobs of infantry in wild flight. The Austrians were pressing forward. The day was lost, the afternoon was waning, and darkness would fall upon the army of France destroyed—and with it, the Republic.

DELAUNAY departed with the news to the General, sending a man to take his place while he was gone.

Suddenly Beauchamp, watching intently despite the crick in his neck, saw Coutelle leaning over the edge of the basket, frantically waving. He responded. The message came—the Austrian columns, the crack imperial divisions, were at the very gates of Charleroi, were pouring in upon the city. Mindful of the General's orders, Beauchamp seized quill and inkpot, took out one of Saint Just's torn paper scraps, and hastily scribbled the message:

"The Austrian columns are about to enter Charleroi."

He signed it, noted the hour, and waved it at the man beside him.

"Take this—no, wait! I'll take it myself. Remain here to receive any messages that come."

He departed at a run.

Bathed in dusty sweat, his throat choked, unable to speak, he came panting up to General Jourdan. The eyes of Saint Just, of the staff officers, were fastened on him curiously. He thrust the message into Jourdan's hand.

JOURDAN glanced at it, stiffened, and a blaze came into his face.

"Off with you!" blared his voice at his staff. "Mount, mount and ride. Take the order to every commander. Attack! Attack swiftly, instantly, at all costs! *Attack!*"

As though to emphasize his words, a new sound shook the air. A rumble and growl of artillery, of tremendous, unending artillery that sounded as though a hundred thunderbolts were riving the heavens at once. Jourdan caught the arm of Saint Just.

"They did not know!" he burst forth. "They did not know we had taken Charleroi—the artillery was there, waiting—it has opened upon them. It will destroy them!"

And it did. When the sun fell, Coburg had recoiled from that frightful trap, his legions shattered, his army in flight, his cause lost. . . . And the Republic was saved.

That night Saint Just left for Paris, to bear the great news himself—and to go to the guillotine with Robespierre, though he foresaw it not. But beside a flickering bivouac fire sat Beauchamp, feeding into the flames a sheaf of papers from his pocket. And around him rang the joyful voices of wearied, exultant men—the first company of aviators toasting the bag that hung above them in the night sky—the *Entreprenant*, the first war balloon.

Years later Napoleon, in one of his fits of blind prejudice that cost him some of his best men, that ruined his finances, that eventually ruined his empire, disbanded the aviation companies and sold the *Entreprenant* to a private aëronaut named Robertson.

Fleurus was forgotten, but the goodly company of aviators were to live again.

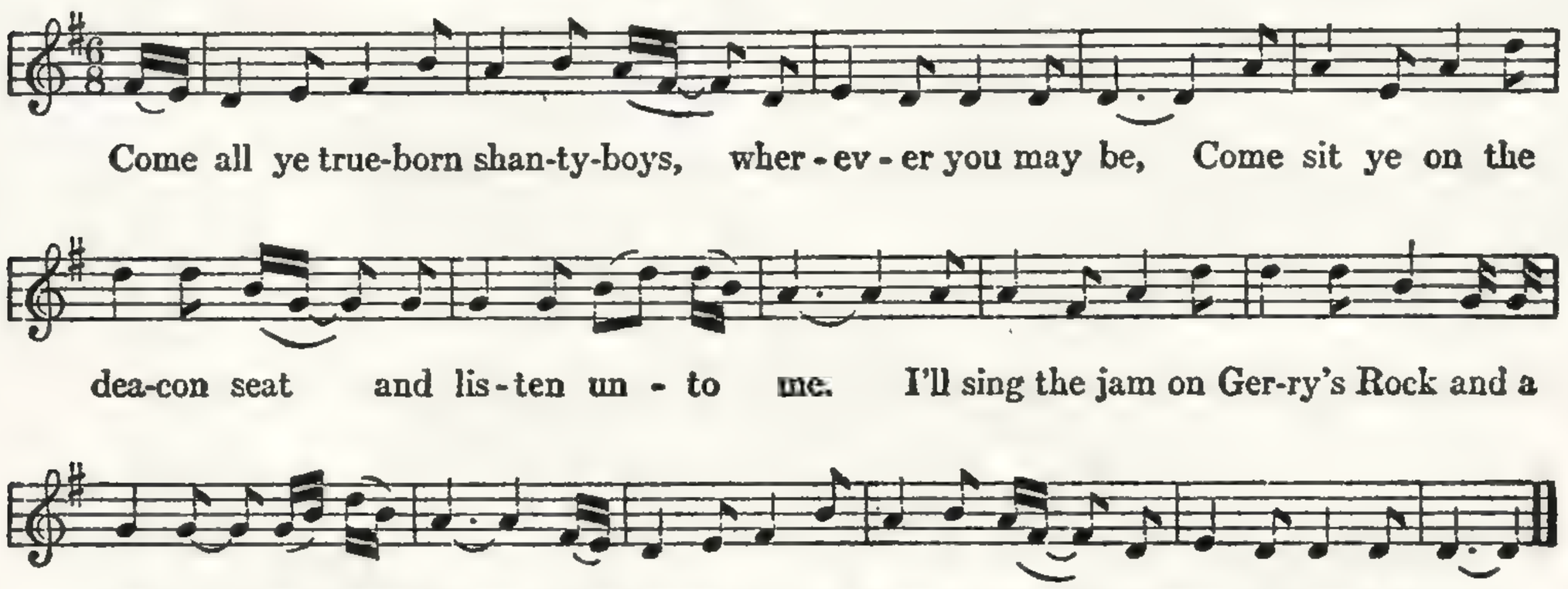
Another vividly exciting story in this fine series will appear in the next, the December, issue.

Made in America

The Jam on Gerry's Rock

ON a melodious winter evening in Salem, Oregon, Charles Olaf Olsen, logger and poet, was asked to tell a lie that had few words and much imagination. He said: "Once there was a logger who had a trunk." . . . Then James Stevens, logger and author, sang "The Jam on Gerry's Rock," sonorously, rockingly, beating time with a sure, unfailing foot that slammed the floor with accurate measures. . . . It is a heavy, brooding ballad, portentous as a log-boom on an ice-locked river. . . . Rickaby, in an extended note, says it was born in Canada or Michigan, with the odds of witnesses in favor of Michigan. He observes: "Old fellows told me anyone starting Gerry's Rock in the shanties was summarily shut off because the song was sung to death; others vow that of all songs it was ever and always the most welcome."

"Deacon seat" was shanty lingo for a seat, or board, extending from the lower tier of bunks and running square or oblong around the bunkhouse; it was where they sat between supper-time and bedtime and smoked, talked, sang, and told Paul Bunyan stories.


Come all ye true-born shan-ty-boys, wher-ev-er you may be, Come sit ye on the
dea-con seat and lis-ten un-to me. I'll sing the jam on Ger-ry's Rock and a
he-ro you should know, The bravest of all shan-ty-boys, the foreman, Young Mun-ro.

2 'Twas on a Sunday morning, ere daylight did appear.
The logs were piling mountain-high: we could not keep them clear.
"Cheer up! Cheer up, my rivermen, relieve your hearts of woe!
We'll break the jam on Gerry's Rock!" cried our foreman, Young Munro.

3 Now some of them were willing, while others hid from sight.
To break a jam on Sunday they did not think it right.
Till six of our brave shanty-boys did volunteer to go
And break the jam on Gerry's Rock with our foreman, Young Munro.

4 They had not picked off many logs till Munro to them did say,
"I must send you back up the drive, my boys, for the jam will soon give way!"
Alone he freed the key-log then, and when the jam did go
It carried away on the boiling flood our foreman, Young Munro.

5 Now when the boys up at the camp the news they came to hear,
In search of his dead body down the river they did steer;
And there they found to their surprise, their sorrow, grief and woe,
All bruised and mangled on the beach, lay the corpse of Young Munro.

Guaranteed Antiques of Song and Story

Edited by CARL SANDBURG

Author of "Abraham Lincoln," "Smoke and Steel," "The People, Yes!" etc.

6 They picked him up most tenderly, smoothed down his raven hair.
There was one among the watchers whose cries did rend the air.
The fairest lass of Saginaw let tears of anguish flow;
But her moans and cries could not awake her true love, Young Munro.

7 The Missus Clark, a widow, lived by the river-side;
This was her only daughter, Munro's intended bride.
So the wages of her perished love the boss to her did pay
And a gift of gold was sent to her by the shanty-boys next day.

8 When she received the money she thanked them tearfully,
But it was not her portion long on the earth to be;
For it was just six weeks or so when she was called to go
And the shanty-boys laid her at rest by the side of Young Munro.

9 They decked the graves most decently—'twas on the fourth of May—
Come all ye true-born shanty-boys and for a comrade pray!
Engraven on a hemlock tree which by the beach did grow,
Are the name and date of the mournful fate of the foreman, Young Munro.

Several hundred of these pioneer songs have been gathered by Carl Sandburg, and published in book form by Harcourt, Brace and Company, under the title "The American Songbag."

The man got stiffly to his feet and reeled toward the two blood-maddened brutes. "Tonight we eat!" he panted. "Wolf stew! Bones for Rough! Food!"

SLOWLY over the crusted tundra that lifted above the timbered valley of an ice-locked river crawled three dark shapes, like crippled ants crossing white earth. Twice within a mile as they labored over the naked ridge toward the valley the two hooded figures slumped to the hard snow beside a great dog hitched to a toboggan sled almost empty. When they rose to go on, rawhide thongs, slipped over their shoulders and made fast to the sled, aided the dog. As they made their way slowly over the good footing of hard snow, the two men swayed like drunkards. The dog, whose heavy coat of black-and-white failed to conceal his emaciation, limped stiffly at their heels, nose low, thick brush sweeping the snow.

Far back on their trail, unnoticed by the three, slunk four skeleton shapes. When the two men and the dog stopped to rest, the four gray wraiths also lay down, slavering tongues lolling from red jaws rimmed with icicles. For hours the four stalkers had followed the slowly moving sled unseen by the men, while the dog, with the light breeze in his face, had failed to get their scent. At last, as the sun hung like a ball of brass above the western hills, the two men and the dog gained the shoulder of the barren and lay down on the crust, their frozen breaths lifting above them like smoke.

After a space the larger of the two men raised his hooded head and pushed his wooden eye-shields, pierced by slits, up from frost-blackened features. It was the face of a boy of twenty, cracked skin tight on the bones of strongly modeled jaw and cheeks, deep-set gray eyes bright from starvation.

"If we don't find the Montagnais camps today, tomorrow—"

For an instant he buried his face in the thick black ruff of the dog that lay beside him, then sat up and gazed intently over their back trail.

UNGAVA GOLD

A complete novel by the able author of "The Valley of Voices," "Under Frozen Stars" and other noted books.

Illustrated by Grattan Condon

By GEORGE MARSH

"Noel," he said quietly, "did you ever eat wolf? If I can keep my sights lined, we're going to eat some tonight or they're going to eat us."

"W'at you see, Alan?" The other hooded figure got stiffly to his feet, pushed back the eye-shields and the long wolf-hair fringe of his hood, and stared at the sky-line behind them. The face was that of an Indian.

"By gar!" he cried. "We boil de kettle tonight. You nevaire eat wolf, but you eat wolf tonight!"

The breeze had shifted and the great dog painfully got to his feet, testing the air with dilating nostrils.

Swaying giddily on his feet while he rested a rabbit-skin mitten on the black-and-white skull of the husky, Alan Cameron pointed with the other hand to the four wolves in the distance.

"See them, Rough?" he said to the excited dog.

The hair on the husky's back and neck rose. There followed a deep rumble in the hairy throat as he stiffened.

With shaking hands Alan drew his rifle from its skin case, where it lay lashed on the sled.

"You go on with Rough, Noel! They'll follow the trail up. I'll play dead on the snow and try for a shot. It's the only way we'll get one!"

The Indian scowled, slowly shaking his head. "Dose are white wolf from de nord—starved out. Dey see you lie on de snow, here, dey weel rush you! Suppose you miss dem, Rough and I weel be too far for to help."

"They won't come close in on us until dark, I tell you. The only way we can get a daylight shot is to do as I say!" Alan insisted. "Here's a chance for meat—to keep us alive, man! If these spots in my eyes will stop dancing, I can get one—from an elbow-rest."

Reluctantly the Indian acquiesced.

"*Marche*, Rough!" commanded Alan. "You go with Noel. D'you hear me?"

The gaunt husky stood stubbornly in his traces, gazing up at his master with uncomprehending slant eyes. Enemies

were back on their trail—and Alan was ordering him to leave!

Bending over the bewildered husky, Alan spoke sharply into his ear: "Go with Noel! *Marche!* Y'understand?"

A low protesting whine and the lifting of a white muzzle as the dark eyes of the great dog searched his master's scowling face; then his great throat rumbled in bitter protest, and he slowly started the sled.

HARASSED by uncertain vision and weakness, Alan settled himself on the snow to await the approach of the Arctic wolves. As he lay flat on the crust, watching the oncoming wolves, his body shook with the pounding of his heart, with the fear that his uncertain eyes and weakened nerves would cause him to miss when food—food for Rough and Noel and himself—lay within his reach. Without food they would never have the strength to reach the trappers' camps two days, perhaps more, beyond them. So the youth, who was already known at the fur-posts along the East Coast as a better shot than even his dead father Graham Cameron, once Hudson's Bay factor at Fort George, lay hoping against hope that when the time came the rifle in his hands would hold true. For if he missed, the wolves would ignore the gun-shot and rush him; and he'd have slim chance of stopping the hungry beasts before they tore him to ribbons.

As Alan lay waiting the cautious approach of the four assassins of the tundra, his thoughts turned back to his home at Fort George far to the west on the coast of the great bay. If he and Noel and Rough never returned with the rest of the trappers for the spring trade, how long would his name linger in the memory of the black-eyed Berthe Dessane? That sleek Arsène Rivard, clerk at the Revillon Frères, would win her over with his tales of life down at Quebec and Montreal. She'd soon forget Alan Cameron, whose bones lay somewhere in the nameless tundra country of the Big River headwaters. And his cabin at the post, with the few earthly possessions his mother and father had left him, who—

Suddenly the man lying on the snow stiffened, for the four white wolves were approaching at a slow lope. On they came; then a short rifle-shot away they separated and began to circle the still shape on the crust, until the scarcely moving air gave them the strange man scent. Then the starved beasts squatted on their haunches, and pointing their noses at the sky, sent the wailing cry of the wolf-pack close to the kill, out over the white tundra.

In seconds, from the valley, came the answering challenge of a frenzied husky—frenzied because the man he loved was back on the barren alone, with those howling beasts he hated. And at the sound, Alan smiled as he waited with drumming heart for a closer shot.

Suddenly, not fifty yards from the man on the snow, the skulking animals stopped their stealthy circling and swiftly bunched together. They were coming!

The rifle roared—roared again!

With a yelp the lead wolf somersaulted in the air, then slid limp along the crust, followed by a second, which rolled over and over frantically snapping at his bleeding flanks. Behind them the remaining two, mad with the sight of blood, fell upon their wounded mates.

Again the whiplash crack of a rifle waked the tundra. The man on the snow got stiffly to his feet and reeled toward the two blood-maddened brutes slicing their kin to ribbons. Then he stopped, took deliberate aim at the milling beasts and fired. But in his increasing weakness, his rifle-barrel swayed like a branch in a wind. Hit glancingly, one of the wolves loped stiffly away on three legs over the crusted snow, followed by the fourth. Firing again and missing, Alan turned to see a great black-and-white dog coming at a painful stiff-legged lope over the tundra, slipping and falling in his weakness, rising again to struggle on to the master who was battling alone. Behind the dog, stumbling forward in a half trot, came Noel, rifle in hand.

"Bless their hearts!" panted the excited boy. "They sneaked back to help me! But tonight we eat! Wolf stew! Food—and bones for Rough to gnaw!"

Reaching Alan, the infuriated husky threw himself upon the bodies of the wolves, and weak as he was, shook them in turn as he would snowshoe rabbits.

"By gar, Alan!" gasped the breathless Noel. "You do good job, but—suppose you miss dem! Rough and I—we turn back w'en we see you not watch us. We too scare to leave you far, Alan!"

WITH a fire roaring in the snow-hole, scraped out with snowshoes, and over which a shed tent was stretched to hold the heat, Alan and Noel hungrily watched the boiling stew while the satisfied dog slept beside them.

In the North, starving men were not greeted in this fashion! "You don't need that gun!" Alan rasped.

"We've got to go slow on this stew, Noel, or we'll be sick," warned Cameron. "We'll stay right here, until we get our strength back; then we'll take what's left and start to find the Indians. But suppose the Montagnais have left the Sinking Lakes?"

The Indian shook his head as he muttered: "Den we are feenish."

For two days the famished men and the dog rested in the shelter of the windbreak of timber beside the frozen river while the wind drove the fine snow before it like smoke over the crusted tundra. Wise in the lore of the bush, they ate frequently but little at a time while their weak stomachs gained strength. But the nourishment afforded by the leathery thews and sinews of the two starved wolves was limited. While Rough, with the marvelous vitality of the Ungava bred on Hudson Straits, was fast regaining strength, Alan and Noel were still weak and unsteady on their feet when they again set off up the valley toward the Sinking Lakes in search of the camps of the Montagnais trappers.

On the morning of the third day of their march up the valley they stopped to rest, the two men sprawled on the wind-packed snow beside the husky.

"Ah-ha!" And the Indian lad sighed. "We go wan—two—sleep more; den de fox an' de carcajou chew our bones."

Alan reached over to his recumbent dog, and dropping the rabbit-skin mitten which hung from his neck by a rawhide thong, rubbed the massive muzzle. His heart shining out of his eyes, the dog lifted his head, and with a staccato intake and expulsion of breath through his nostrils gave what Alan called Rough's "love-snuffle."

For a moment the man buried his face in the thick black ruff of the dog's neck, then sat up and gazed far up the valley where a stand of spruce and poplar occupied the flat country between the river and the lifting shoulders of the tundra. For a space his eyes wandered aimlessly; then of a sudden, his mittened hand brushed back the wolf-hair rim of his hood as his gaze focused on the timber, blue in the distance. Scrambling to his feet, he cried to the man beside him:

"Look, Noel! Look at the timber up there on the shore!"

The Indian rose to his knees. "W'at you see?"

"In that black spruce up the river, Noel!" Alan pointed with a shaking mitten. "Is that haze or smoke?"

"Smoke! Dat ees smoke! De Montagnais!"

"D'you hear, Rough?" cried Alan to the dog who had risen and was shaking himself. "Fish tonight for a hungry dog and two men. Maybe tea, and flour—bannock! Maybe caribou!"

His great brush of a tail sweeping the crust in his excitement, Rough fidgeted in his harness, impatient to be off, while the arms of the men circled each other's shoulders in a delirious hug. Standing over his dog, Alan choked: "Tonight we eat, Roughy! *Marche,* boy!"

The crust offered good footing and with snowshoes on the sled and what strength remained in their uncertain legs, Noel and Alan followed the dog over the river ice up the valley.

AN hour later, turning inshore at a water-hole in the ice, they followed a beaten trail back into the timber.

"Somet'ing ver' strange here," said the puzzled Indian, shaking his hooded head. "Dis ees no Montagnais camp. W'ere are de dog sign?"

"No, there are no signs of dogs, no signs of— Well, look at that!"

"By gar, white men on de Talkeeng Rivière!"

Standing beside the husky whose throat rumbled as he suspiciously sniffed the air while the hair of his mane and back slowly rose, Alan and Noel gazed in amazement at the substantial log building, banked high with snow, which stood in the center of a clearing.

"White men on the Talking River!" Alan repeated, his curious eyes noting the size of the log cabin with its large mud-plastered chimney, the huge platform cache evidently piled with supplies which were covered by canvas, the two pairs of snowshoes and the toboggan sled stuck in the snow beside the door, and close by, the ample remains of what had evidently been an enormous woodpile in the previous autumn.

"Beeg cache dere! Plentee feesh and meat, eh?" whispered Noel, licking his cracked lips. "But w'ere are de dog?"

"Yes, tonight we'll eat, Noel; tonight we'll eat! Come on!"

Dizzy from weakness, Alan started for the cabin. Reaching the slab door, he struck it with his mittened hand and called: "Hello! Hello there, inside!"

For answer the door slowly swung in—and the two pinched faces in the hoods stared into the black muzzle of an automatic pistol. Hunched behind the pistol stood a bearded giant of a man whose ice-blue eyes glittered hostilely beneath a livid scar that gouged his forehead.

In all the wide North, starving men were not greeted in this fashion! Alan Cameron's eyes flamed with anger as he met the cold stare that probed his.

"You don't need that gun!" he rasped. "We're starved out. Our trap-lines are up on the Mad River. We trade at Fort George. A wolverine got into our cache and destroyed every bit of fish and flour we had."

The threat slowly faded from the cold eyes and the gun went back to its holster. "Starved out, eh? You look it!"

"We were on our way to the Sinking Lakes to find the Montagnais."

"Well, you'd been out of luck if you hadn't struck this place. There are no hunters on Sinking Lakes this winter."

Alan and Noel exchanged perplexed glances.

"Now, boys," said the giant heartily, "I've got some caribou stew in the kettle that'll wipe that hungry look off your faces. Come in!"

"My dog, here," said Alan, "—you'll give him something too?"

"There's plenty of stew for you all. Unhitch him and bring him in."

Dropping to his knees beside Rough, as Alan threw off his collar and belly-band, he whispered into a hairy ear: "You hear that, Roughy? No more tough wolf! Stew! Deer stew for the big dog!"

"Drop your coats and moccasins and make yourselves cozy, boys," said their host, as the two starved men inhaled the appetizing odors emanating from a huge copper kettle, perched on a sheet-iron folding stove which stood at the side of the clay-plastered fireplace. The big man filled two aluminum cups and a pan from the kettle. "You'll get just one cup apiece, now. It'll knock you out, if you hog it in your condition. I guess the dog can stand a panful."

"We've been living on wolf the last week—what there was of it," said Alan. "I got two, but there wasn't much meat."

"Timber wolves?"

"No, white Arctic wolves."

"That explains it—hunting south for the caribou, and most of the deer have moved east out of this country."

"That's why the Montagnais did not winter on Sinking Lakes," nodded Alan.

SEATED on a chair of split spruce slabs, Alan gazed curiously about the interior of the cabin, while the big

yellow-haired man offered Noel a plug of smoking tobacco, and from another cut fillings for the huge pipe he held in his hand. The spruce log walls were carefully chinked with moss plastered with mud. Two small windows made of caribou parchment were aided by a large candle set in a horn stick. On a wall a pair of caribou antlers held three rifles; from their brow tines hung two belts with sheathed skinning knives. Built into a corner of the room was a double-decked bunk mattressed with spruce boughs and covered with Hudson's Bay blankets and dressed caribou- and bear-skins. A closed slab door, hung on rawhide hinges, communicated with a second room.

THE urge of Alan's stomach was forgotten in his amazement at finding a permanent camp, which no man could build alone, on the frontiers of the unknown interior of Ungava. Who was this man and where were the others?

As the giant turned to him, Alan pleaded: "Just one more cup of that stew!"

"No more, now," was the answer. "I'm boss here! Lie down, you two, and get some rest like the dog there. He's asleep already."

So Alan and Noel stretched upon the lower section of the bunk; almost immediately the warmth of the cabin and the food in their stomachs brought sleep.

For a long space the owner of the cabin, with many a doubtful shake of the head, scowled down at the sleeping strangers, flotsam that the white sea of the Labrador tundra had cast up at his door. Presently, satisfied that his guests were unconscious, he tiptoed on noiseless moccasins to the door and slipped outside to the sled. Feeling of the light load under the lashed-down wrapping, he muttered:

"Trappers all right! Queer that fine-looking Scotch lad should make a partner of an Indian. Fur-pack and rifles, blankets and cooking kit, and—not a bite of grub. Story's straight, but I wonder if—"

Through the door of the shack, left slightly ajar by its owner, was thrust a white muzzle. Black nostrils quivered in a long sniff. Then a massive black-and-white head thrust the heavy door open, and slowly, on stiff legs, with flattened ears and back hair stiff, the gaunt husky limped toward the man at the sled.

"You're a dog, all right!" admired the giant, straightening, as he watched the advancing Rough, wrinkled muzzle baring his white tusks. "Don't figure I've got any business with the boys' outfit, eh? Well, how'll this suit you?"

Coolly watching the approaching dog, the speaker backed away from the sled toward a pile of birch firewood. Evidently satisfied, the dog curled himself in the snow beside his master's possessions, his slant eyes following the owner of the scarred face as he reëntered the cabin.

There was a deep yawn from the bunk.

"Well, ready for more broth, boys?"

Alan and Noel rose from the bunk, their drawn faces beaming. They drank the nourishing liquor and asked for more.

"Since we're going to see something of each other before you head for home," said the giant, "what's your name?"

"Alan Cameron. My father was factor at Fort George. My partner's name is Noel Leloup."

The big man extended a calloused hand to each of the boys. "My name is John McCord. Welcome to Castle McCord!" he added with a laugh.

Alan's mind was busy with the mystery of how this yellow-haired giant had found his way to the Talking River, whose headwater lakes lie on the frontier of an unknown country. For no Montagnais, trading at Fort George, knew what was behind those white moss barrens that rolled away into the uttermost north. Traditions there were, of this mythical heart of Ungava which in Eskimo means the *Farthest Land*—tales of lakes so wide that no eyes could see the blue hills of the far shores; of wild rivers racing into the north until they met the frozen sea; myths of the fierce Naskapi, the Caribou People, who lived in the unknown interior.

This stranger in a well-built cabin, alone, on the frontier of the wild heart of Ungava—who was he? Why had he come? Where were his men and dogs?

CUPS and pan were shortly filled again. Then, lighting his pipe, McCord observed: "Worst tangle of lakes I ever saw—the headwater country of these big rivers!"

"How did you get here?"

The gray eyes of Cameron met a sudden cold stare. "That's a fair question," admitted their host, however. "I came in from Rupert House with two canoes and six Indians. Some of my dogs were drowned in October on the young ice. My men took the rest and went to East Main for more."

"From Rupert House?" Alan and Noel exchanged puzzled looks.

"Yes; it took all summer. We were lost half the time. But we finally picked up a Montagnais who knew the portages to the Sinking Lakes. So here I am."

ALAN'S suspicions, aroused by their hostile reception, were fading under McCord's seeming frankness. But who was it he had feared when he opened the door? Whom did he expect to meet here in the solitudes of the Talking River country?

"You know where you are?" asked Alan. "On the edge of an unknown wilderness. No hunter knows what lies beyond the Sinking Lakes. The Montagnais will not cross the divide."

The bearded man threw back his head with a great laugh. "I suppose there are evil spirits there too, and giant Windigo who eat men alive?"

Into the dark eyes of Noel stole a look of uneasiness. Among his people belief in the supernatural was universal, and to them the unknown heart of Ungava had for generations been a tabooed land, the home of demons.

"It's simply a question of grub," Alan replied. "To go far into this country, a man would have to winter there and find the caribou—or starve."

The big man nodded. "That's it! It's always a matter of grub in the bush. Ever hear of the River of Skulls?"

"Rivière of Skull!" gasped Noel, his small eyes wide with fear. "De spirit rivière, far een de lan' of de Caribou People!"

"The old Montagnais have many tales of this unknown country," explained Alan. "This River of Skulls is supposed to be haunted by spirits. No one has ever been there. It is old men's talk."

The man with the livid scar looked hard at the speaker. "How do you know no one has ever been there?"

Alan answered coolly, "No one from Fort George has ever been there."

"Guess you're right, lad! And it's supposed to flow into the Koksoak—this River of Skulls?"

"I don't know. It may flow into the Koksoak. Gabriel Dessane, at Fort George, says that all the rivers northeast of here must flow north into Hudson's Straits. He was once trader for the Revillon Frères at Fort Chimo, on the Koksoak."

The eyes of the giant burned with sudden interest. "On the Koksoak, eh! At Chimo, and he's now at Fort George? By glory, that's interesting."

The sudden rising of Rough, who moved to the door, a low rumble in his throat, checked the speaker.

"Some one is coming," announced Alan, watching the face of the big man slowly expand into a smile.

The hair along the husky's spine slowly rose. The rumble deepened as he sniffed at the door. Then from the direction of the frozen river came a call.

"Who—who, hoo-hoo, who—hoo-o-o!" The call of the horned owl drifted from the river to the cabin. The dog at the door sucked in his breath in a long snarl.

McCord rose and Alan seized Rough by his rawhide collar. "Steady, boy! Steady!" he crooned into a hairy ear.

McCord threw open the heavy slab door of the shack.

"Hello, Dad! Where on earth did this sled and dog harness come from? I noticed the trail on the river."

Beside the boys' sled, with a small rifle in one hand, the other holding three snowshoe rabbits, stood a slender hooded figure clothed in Hudson's Bay duffel.

"We've got some visitors," replied the man in the doorway. "Hang those rabbits up and come in before these boys eat all of your supper." Then he closed the door and turned to his guests.

"I didn't tell you I had a partner wintering with me," he explained with a chuckle. "In fact, I wouldn't've known what to do without her. I see from your face you think I'm crazy to bring a girl into this country," he added to Alan, who shook his head doubtfully. "But she wouldn't let me come alone. I know I was wrong, but what could I do? She's as strong and able as a boy—good shot, handy in a canoe and can walk me off my feet. Well, here she is!"

THE door opened; the girl closed it behind her and stood leaning against it. With a toss of her head, she threw back the hood of her parka. Her face, browned by sun and wind, was framed in a tumbled mass of gold.

"Heather," said the giant with a wave of the hand as the questioning eyes of the girl sought his, then curiously met the embarrassed gaze of the boys, "Alan Cameron, here, of Fort George, with Noel Leloup and Rough, walked in today, starved out."

"Gosh! That's too bad!"

"She's John McCord's daughter," thought Alan, as he noted the tall symmetrical build of the girl, which even the parka coat and heavy duffel leggings

"Put de husky out; we sleep here!" the Indian ordered, moving nearer to the girl. But as she drew back, Rough catapulted across the room.

failed to conceal. "She has it all, the blue of his eyes and the yellow hair."

The girl gave her hand to each of the boys; then as Rough nosed tentatively forward, ears pricked, brown eyes watching her closely, she cried: "What a beautiful dog! Dad, if we only had a team like— What did you say his name was?" She turned to Alan.

"Rough."

"Come, girl, get off your coat and those heavy moccasins and socks, and have some supper," broke in the giant. "It will soon be dark, and we've no candles to waste."

An hour later, when they had finished a simple supper of corn-bread, caribou stew and tea, McCord said:

"Daughter, these boys are all worn out and need sleep, so you toddle off to bed, when we've done these dishes."

The brows of the girl almost met in a frown as she studied her father's face, then turning to Alan with a laugh, she said: "That's a bargain, Alan—if you'll hitch Rough to the sled, as soon as he gets his strength back, and give me a ride on the river."

"He's a little lame now, but in a day or two he'll show you what a real sled-dog is," replied Alan proudly.

With a "Good night, all!" the girl shortly thereafter went to her room.

McCord moved the table back to the wall, lit his pipe, then turned to Alan.

"Are you afraid to travel beyond the Sinking Lakes?" he asked calmly.

For a space the surprised youth stared. Then his frost-cracked lips curled as he said contemptuously:

"You think I'm afraid to go into that country? I tell you it's just a question of common sense—of whether you'll starve out."

The bearded face with its livid scar was thrust closer. "Would you go with me—next year?" the giant asked.

In frightened protest Noel cried: "De Land of de Caribou People? Not dere—no, not dere!"

Alan impatiently waved Noel back. "You're a stranger, Mr. McCord," said the boy. "You've saved our lives. And we owe you much. But I don't go into the bush with a man I don't know. You've asked me a question. Well, I ask you one before I answer. Who are you, and why are you here?"

The man whose piercing blue eyes never left the speaker's face, laughed. "Fair enough," he agreed. "I'm from down Ottawa way, but I've spent a good many years in the bush. I'm up here with the idea of doing some trading. They tell me that a big trade of black- and silver-fox pelts comes down to the

coast from these headwaters—black marten too, and lynx."

But as he talked, Alan recalled the fighting glitter in McCord's eyes, earlier in the day, when he opened the door of the cabin to the call of starving men. What had brought him to that door fingering the trigger of that automatic?

CHAPTER II

WHEN Heather McCord opened her door shortly after the sun lit the parchment windows of the cabin, she greeted her father's guest with a look of undisguised approval. Shaved, scrubbed and wearing a clean shirt, the embarrassed stranger of the night before was now himself, and even thin as he was, a striking youth with regular features and deep-set gray eyes.

"Good morning!" she said. "Feel better?"

The blood flooded his dark frost-burned face. "I'll be as good as new in a few days."

Rough, who had slept indoors as an especial favor to a starved dog, yawned deeply, rose, stretched, shook himself, then walked to the girl, who boldly placed her hand on the massive head. Ears forward, the husky measured her for a space through slant eyes, sniffed, then met her hand with the thrust of a red tongue.

"You've put a spell on him!" exclaimed the surprised Alan. "You're the first stranger he's ever made up to."

"We won't be strangers long." She knelt and calmly took the husky's jowls in her hands, while his tail swept slowly to and fro as he looked into her face.

"You've got a way with dogs," commented Alan.

She laughed. "You're a darling old bear, aren't you, Roughy?"

As Alan watched her he wondered what could have induced John McCord to bring such a girl into the heart of the Ungava barrens. . . .

During the following days, while the boys and dog were regaining their lost strength, Alan talked much with McCord. But when Cameron asked direct questions, he received evasive answers. The mystery of the giant's presence on the Talking River was still unsolved; for his explanation that he was there to trade with the Indians seemed insufficient. Nevertheless, in the friendship of their life together, Alan and Noel gradually surrendered to the magnetism of the man who had saved them from a wilderness death. They were convinced that behind that bulk and power lay the mettle of a man. . . .

One morning, when river surface and tundra glittered like myriad diamonds under the high March sun, Heather hitched Rough to her father's small trapping toboggan for a ride on the river ice.

Bound for some rabbit snares which he had set in the willow thickets above the camp, Alan followed the girl and the dog to the shore.

"I don't know what I'm going to do without Roughy," she said, as she stood beside the impatient husky.

"Oh, you'll forget us soon enough."

"I was speaking of the dog," she said with a grimace.

Springing away, Heather dropped to her knees on the sled and called:

"*Marche*, Roughy boy! We're off!"

With a wave of her mittened hand the girl was whisked through air keen as a knife edge, away over the river ice, the husky yelping for joy at each leap.

Twice, as Alan followed the rabbit-snares set in the thick willows of the shore reaches above the camp, he heard Heather and Rough skimming over the wind-brushed river ice, the laughter of the girl mingling with the wild yelping of the dog. Finishing his round of the snares, he came out to the shore a mile above the camp and looked up and down stream, but the river was deserted. Thinking that they had gone on upstream, he walked to a bend in the shore. But on the sweep of white river ice before him there was no sled. Then his heart suddenly slowed as he noticed, a quarter of a mile above, near the shore, black objects, low on the ice. Dropping the rabbits he carried, Alan ran like a hunted caribou.

"If they can only hold on—only hold on!" he prayed.

AS he neared the two struggling in the suck of the strong current, Alan saw that the girl was holding firmly by her arms on strong ice, but that the husky was breaking down the ice-edge by churning and clawing with his powerful forelegs to hold himself up against the drag of the sled beneath him.

"Hold on! Hold on, Rough!" he cried, desperate with fear.

Clinging to the edge of the ice, the girl gasped: "Get Rough! The sled's—pulling him—under! I'm—all right!"

The spread paws of the frantic dog were slowly slipping on the clawed ice.

"Hold on, Roughy!"

With a last desperate lunge of his powerful forelegs, the despairing dog lifted his head and shoulders above the water. The deep throat sent a farewell whine to the master who was coming too late. Slowly, like an anchor, the drag of the sled drew the slipping nails to the edge of the ice, and the heroic dog sank beneath the surface.

THERE was a heavy splash as Alan Cameron threw himself into the water beside his vanished dog. Hooking one arm on the ice-edge, he reached under water and gripped a trace of the dog, who thrashed wildly against the drag of the sled to gain the surface. With a wrench of his powerful arm and shoulder, Alan drew the struggling Rough up to the ice-edge. Aided by Alan's lift on the trace, the dog hooked his forelegs again on the ice. Releasing the trace, Alan whipped out his skinning-knife, slashed both traces. The great husky drew himself out of the water, turned and clamping his teeth on the capote of his master, slowly drew him out on the ice.

"Oh, you've saved him—you've saved him!"

With a spring the dog reached the rim of the firm ice where Heather clung, and seizing a sleeve of her capote, while Alan gripped a hand, dog and man drew the girl from the water.

"Quick now!" he cried. "We'll wring some of the water out of your clothes! They'll freeze solid. We've got to strike for camp."

Shivering like a man with ague, in his skin parka, Alan wrung what water he could from the duffel clothes of the girl.

"We've lost—the sled," she said ruefully.

"We can make another in a day or two! Come on now! No time to talk—*run!*" commanded Alan, seizing Heather's arm, while she, half-crying, half-laughing, attempted to explain how she had forgotten her father's warning and had driven Rough into the treacherous ice of the rapids.

"Rough and I—were having—such a good—time," she explained, through chattering teeth.

"It was fine of you—to tell me to get Rough first!" said Alan, as they ran. "You're a brave girl, Heather!"

"But the sled was—pulling him under. You—had to!"

Three ice-incrusted figures reached the warm camp where McCord surprised Alan and Heather, swathed in blankets, drying out before the fire, by saying:

"What would there be left for me—with Heather, you and Rough out there under that ice?" . . . .

Now March, the southern Montagnais' "Moon of the Crust on the Snow," was drawing to an end. Three weeks of nourishing food had wrought miracles in the two famished young men and the lean husky who had drifted in out of the jaws of the white death to the cabin of John McCord. But their coming had been no hardship to the great food cache beside the cabin, for in return for the flour, sugar and tea they had consumed, Alan and Noel had brought in many a sled-load of fish taken in a net set under the ice of the Sinking Lakes, and the meat of caribou.

But if the boys were to escape being caught on their way to Fort George by the spring break-up, when the crust goes suddenly soft before the advancing sun, and water floods the river ice, there was no time to waste. April, the "Moon of the Breaking of the Snowshoes" in all the wide North, when the bottoms fall out of the trails, was close at hand.

The afternoon before Alan planned to start for the coast, he was walking with McCord, their snowshoes slung from their backs, on their return from a round of the trap-lines in the timber of the river valley. Suddenly McCord said:

"I want you to bring back some real dogs—then winter with me!"

"Winter with you?" Alan was amazed.

"I've watched you, alone and with your dog. I've seen you handle an ax and a rifle. I've listened to your talk. I haven't lived forty years for nothing. You're young, but you're the man I looked for and couldn't find, in Ontario and at Moose and Rupert House."

"It's huskies you want?" Alan asked.

"Yes, I want a team like Rough. I'll get only scrubs from East Main if I get them at all."

"But Ungava dogs are hard to get," objected Alan. "There are few for sale. The Huskies want them for themselves."

WITH a quick movement McCord slipped his hand from the rabbit-skin mitten, slung by a thong from his neck, and wiped the ice formed by his breath from his short blond beard.

"You're straight as a spruce—or I'm no judge of a face," he said. "I'm going

to trust you, but how about Noel? He's Indian. Can you keep his mouth shut—if they try to learn something?"

"Noel would die for me," answered Alan, wondering what was coming. "He will not talk."

"You're sure? How is it you chose an Indian for a partner?"

"My father found him when he was twelve or thirteen years old, in a starvation camp in the White Bear Hills. He was barely alive. The rest were dead. Father brought him to Fort George, and he grew up with me. He's white clear through; besides, he's one of the best white-water men on the coast and a good hunter."

"I see now," said the other apologetically.

"They try to tease me at Fort George, for he follows me around like a dog. But at eighteen, when my father died and I had to strike out for myself, I took the Montagnais oath of blood brotherhood with Noel. Nothing but death will ever separate us. No, you need not worry; when I've sworn him to secrecy, he'd die rather than talk."

"You'll get the dogs, then?"

"Why not come to the coast and get them yourself?"

"I don't want it known at Fort George where I am going to locate to trade with the Indians. That's why I came in by way of Rupert House—to throw them off the scent, to lose myself. Remember you've never seen me. Can Noel keep that locked in his throat?"

Suddenly across Alan's brain there flashed a suspicion. Could this man facing him here on the river ice be wanted down in the provinces for crime? If not, why all this secretiveness? The Indians would carry the news quickly enough to the coast, the news of a new fur-trader back on the headwaters. Was McCord simply using him to aid his escape?

"You saved our lives," was Alan's answer. "They'll never know at Fort George that we met you."

"I believe you, boy." McCord laid his hand on the other's shoulder. "But will you go up the coast for the dogs?"

Alan hesitated. But the money McCord would pay him might bring that day nearer when, he hoped, Berthe—

"I'll need plenty of tea, tobacco and sugar to trade for dogs with the Huskies," said Alan, weakening.

"I'll give you plenty of money, but you mustn't show it at Fort George. They'd want to know where you got it. And I don't want them to know this summer that you've met me. You get what you need to trade for the dogs on your own fur and credit, and hold the money."

"But what good will that do?" demanded Alan. "Your men must have

Lashed to the sled by thongs, Alan and Noel strained with the willing Ungavas.

reached East Main before Christmas if they left here in November. Fort George would learn by the Christmas mail that you were in here, somewhere."

McCord nodded. "True, but my men didn't know we were on the Big River headwaters."

"So you don't want Fort George to know just where you are?"

"Exactly. If they learn that you've met me, they might follow you when you come back with the dogs."

"Follow me? Why?" Again suspicion lurked in Alan's mind. "But they may be following your Indians now, if they talked at East Main."

McCord slowly shook his hooded head. "They're not following my Indians."

"You mean you think they've deserted you and—Heather? They'd take your dogs and money and not come back—leave you here flat, without a dog or a man to help you?"

"That's just what I'm saying."

"Who were you expecting," demanded Alan, suddenly determined to make an end to this mystery, "when I pounded on your door? You met me with a cocked gun! Who were you expecting then?"

Slowly the somber face of McCord relaxed in a smile and he placed both hands on Alan's wide shoulders. "Steady now! You'll understand it all, later. You bring back those dogs this summer, and you'll never regret it, lad. I give you my word you'll never regret throwing in with John McCord. I want you for my partner, boy. Is it a go?"

"I'll get the dogs," agreed Alan. The lure of this mystery, the magnetism of the blond bearded giant, had won.

And so, on the white shell of the river, as the crusted barren to the east flushed in the afterglow of the smothered sun and frost-fingers clamped hard on the desolate valley, the pact was made.

CHAPTER III

THE following morning, under the paling stars, four dark shapes stood on the river ice in front of the camp.

"Don't you dare forget Heather, Roughy," the girl said to the big husky.

"Well, I'll expect to see you, when?" asked McCord as he gripped Alan's hand.

"Loaded as we'll be with that flour you want, it will be in August," replied Alan. "That is, if we are able to get the dogs near Whale River. If we have to travel to the Little Whale and Richmond Gulf to meet the Huskies, it may be later."

"We'll be here—waiting," said McCord. "If they follow you from Fort George, don't come up the Talking. Cache the stuff at the forks, and go in to

your camp; then bring out your canoe and traps and wait to see what they do."

"Who's going to follow us," demanded Alan with knit eyebrows, "if they don't learn at Fort George we've met you?"

"Boy, I don't know; but you'll be bringing more flour than you usually carry in. They may suspect something. If they follow you, throw them off the trail, then sneak cross-country here from the Mad River branch, and we'll decide then what to do."

"Good-by, partner!" said Alan at length. "I'll do my best." He gripped McCord's hand, then turned to the girl.

"Good-by, Heather!"

"Be sure to come back, Alan! We'll be watching all summer for your canoe!"

ONE April day two weeks later, Alan and Noel reached the mouth of the open river and saw in the distance, on the island, the straggling buildings of the Revillon Frères and the Northern Trading Company, and below them the old Hudson's Bay post of Fort George. As they crossed the river, the eyes of Alan Cameron lit with anticipation, seeking, in the distance, behind the dog stockade of spruce slabs, the white painted house of Gabriel Dessane, agent of the Revillon Frères. The wanderer pictured the surprise of the black-haired Berthe when she learned that he had returned from his trap-lines two months early. What would she say, he wondered, when he started north as soon as the ice cleared the coast for canoe travel? And her father's sleek, new clerk from Quebec, had he tried to make her forget Alan Cameron through the long winter?

As they approached the shore the dogs of the Company mail-team waited for them at the boat-landing. Noses in air, the huskies challenged the approach of the strange dog. His deep throat swelling with answering yelps, Rough stood in the bow of the bateau, ears flat, hair stiff on neck and back. They were close in to the log boat-landing, when Alan called to Noel:

"Hop out and drive those dogs back while I get hold of Rough; he half killed two of them last summer when the whole team jumped on him."

Swinging a paddle, Noel drove the mail-team from the staging, while Alan tied the excited Rough to an upright and unloaded their sled and outfit from the boat. Then, hitching Rough to the sled, they went over to the big frame trade-house of the Hudson's Bay Company.

"Well, upon my soul if it aint Alan Cameron and Noel! What's bringing you two lads to the coast in April?" exclaimed the spectacled Scotchman behind the slab counter of the trade-room as the boys entered.

"De carcajou," explained Noel. "He get to our cache."

"Oh-ho! Wolverine, eh? And you came down on the crust before your grub gave out? Did you bring much fur?"

"Better hunt than last year. I've got some black marten and fox that'll make your mouth water, Duncan. What's the news from outside?" asked Alan.

"Aye, lad, there's plenty of news," answered the clerk. "Some Indians came out at East Main in December with a pretty tale. It seems there aint enough traders already on this coast. There's another one—in on the headwaters."

"What do you mean—a trader on the headwaters?"

"He went in last summer by way of Rupert. He located somewhere beyond Nichicun, on these headwaters. You didn't run into any hunters who knew about this fellow, Alan?"

Cameron slowly shook his head while he waited to hear whether McCord's men had deserted him or had started back with the dogs and supplies they had been sent for.

"Well," continued McNabb, "the joke is on this trader McCord, for the Indians took his dogs and money and headed down the coast for Moose. Now he's stranded in there alone, with what do you think? A girl—his daughter. Fancy taking one's daughter into those wilds!"

Alan followed the other's announcement with an expression of well-feigned surprise on his dark face. So McCord *had* been deserted by his men!

"Pretty tough on a girl," he agreed. "How does he hope to trade in there without help?"

"He can't. He'll be showing up down here this summer, trying to hire it."

THE cloud-masked ball of April sun was buried in the drifting floes of the bay when Alan opened the heavy slab door of the Revillon Frères trade-house, a mile above the Hudson's Bay settlement.

"Ba-gosh! Alan Cameron! W'at you do here de las' of April?" cried a tall Frenchman, turning from the huge stove in the middle of the room and seizing the grinning Alan by the shoulders. "'Allo, Noel! W'at happen to you boys?"

"We had bad luck, Pierre," replied Alan. "A wolverine got to our grub, and the deer had left the country—so we struck for the coast."

"But you have good luck wid de fur?"

"Yes, we've got plenty of marten and fox."

The big Pierre's round face lit with pleasure. "Ah-ha! You mak' de beeg hunt!" He smiled at the youth he held affectionately by the shoulders. "*Tiens!* I am glad to see you, Alan, and dere ees anoder will be glad, eh? Many tam dis winter we talk about you, togedder."

Alan's face was stained with color. "How is she?" he asked.

"Oh, purtee as evair; but dis Arsène —shush!" Pierre broke off, as the door opened, and three men entered the trade-room stamping the wet snow from their moccasins.

"'Allo, Cameron! I heard that you had come in today." A dark young man wearing a small mustache on his sleek round face approached Alan with extended hand.

"Yes!" Alan's sinewy fingers closed on the other's until he winced. With inward scorn Cameron noted the well-fed look of Arsène Rivard, who had passed a soft winter at the post free of any fear of starvation. "We lost our food cache and had to strike for the coast."

WITHOUT comment on the misfortune which might have meant death, Rivard turned to the two men following him into the room. "This is the man Dessane told you about," he said. "He hunts the headwaters; he'll take you there."

Alan's back stiffened; the blood leaped to his face. "How d'you know what I'll do, Rivard?" he rasped.

"What—you're Cameron?" demanded the elder of the strangers, a powerfully built man of forty with pale blue eyes, closely set beneath dark, shaggy brows. The network of fine lines about the eyes and the seamed face gave the impression of one who had lived hard. To the other man, the taller of the two, with light hair and nondescript features, Alan gave but a fleeting glance. The older man evidently was the dominant personality.

"Dessane says you're just the man we want, but we didn't expect to see you for weeks yet," the stranger was saying, as he shook Alan's hand. "My name is McQueen, James McQueen. . . . Shake hands with Tom Slade, my partner. We want to have a talk with you."

What could these people from the "outside" want up the river? Were they prospectors? Then the picture of a giant blocking the doorway of a cabin to two starving men flashed across Alan's memory. "It's a long, hard river," he said, shaking his head doubtfully. "You'd starve, out in that country."

"Why, there's plenty of fish and caribou, they tell me," objected McQueen.

"Yes—plenty of deer if you can find them. This March we couldn't find them."

"When can you start back with us?" abruptly demanded McQueen.

ALAN'S eye caught Noel's inscrutable look as he yawned, shrugged, and retorted: "Mr. McQueen, I'm not starting back with you."

"Look here, Cameron," protested the clerk, "why can't you take these men back with you when you go? They'll pay you well; and anyway, they're—"

"I've got business on the north coast," interrupted Alan; then he turned to McQueen: "Why do you want to go?"

There was a faint twinkle in McQueen's colorless eyes as he exchanged a significant glance with Rivard. "Well, my lad, we'll talk that over later," he replied good-naturedly. "Mr. Dessane tells me you're the man we want. If you've just walked three or four hundred miles, you deserve a rest. Later on, you and I'll talk business."

McQueen turned and engaged Rivard and Slade in conversation while Alan walked to the trade-counter, and asked for some tobacco. As he opened his skin pouch to put in it the plug Pierre placed on the counter, a folded five-dollar bill slipped to the floor. In a flash, Alan's moccasin covered the bill on the floor. Dropping the plug beside his moccasin, he bent over and scooped bill and tobacco from the floor with the same movement of the hand and put them in his pouch. But his body shook with the pounding of his heart. Had it been seen by Rivard and the others?

"I've done it, Noel," groaned Alan to his partner a moment later when Pierre had left them to tell his wife they would have guests for dinner. "I forgot I had that bill in my pouch when I got that tobacco."

"Mebbe dey not see eet," said Noel.

"They saw it; they couldn't help it! Pierre didn't see from where he stood, but Rivard and the others—they saw. How am I going to account for it?

They'll learn that I drew no money here last summer—never touched our balance with Gabriel or the Hudson's Bay. Nobody takes money into the bush, so they're bound to suspect we met somebody. He trusted me, and this is how I repay him."

PIERRE'S return from his cabin interrupted the conversation. Later, when the sound of voices outside the trade-house announced the return of Dessane and the strangers from supper, Alan slipped out of a rear door and went to the factor's house. A black-eyed mite of a girl opened the door to his knock, and with a shriek of joy, threw herself at the returned wanderer, who caught and tossed her high in his arms.

"*Petite* Manon! What a great girl she has grown!" he cried, as the delighted child clung to him. Kissing her on each of her brown cheeks, Alan suddenly reddened with self-consciousness; for smiling in amusement at the man and child, in an inner room stood a girl of eighteen with large dark eyes and a wealth of blue-black hair.

"Welcome, *M'sieu le voyageur!*" And Berthe Dessane ran to him, grasped his hands. Then she noted the leanness of his face. "Oh, but you've not taken care of yourself, Alan, as you promised!" she protested. "You look tired and thin."

She had never looked so lovely as she did then, Alan thought, as she scolded him like a reproving sister. For months he had dreamed of her, this daughter of Dessane.

"You are looking lovely—as usual," he said thickly.

"But you walked the river," she avoided. "You need a team. What has brought you so early?"

"Wolverine in our food cache. We had to leave; there were no deer. But we met some Indians. We haven't starved, Berthe."

"Oh, I'm so glad," she said with relief. Then her face suddenly sobered.

"Arsène saw you drop some money in the trade-room," she whispered. "I overheard him tell Father just now. They have gone to the trade-house to talk with the police."

Police! The bronzed features of Alan Cameron went slowly gray. These strangers who wanted to go to the head of the river were government men—Provincial Police! So Rivard had seen him drop that bill—and how was he to explain it?

"Alan, what's the matter?" Berthe demanded.

"Nothing, nothing at all!" With an effort he regained his self-possession. "That's a good joke on Rivard," he continued, forcing a laugh. "I've had that money in my pouch two years—got it at Whale River when I went with the goose boats that fall."

"I'm glad, Alan. Arsène was so mysterious with Father, I wanted you to know, because he—does not like you."

Seizing her by the shoulders, Alan searched her dark eyes. "Do you still like me?" he demanded. "Has Arsène changed you?"

The long-lashed lids of her black eyes winked hard as she smiled back at him. "You know I do, Alan. And I'm glad—you've come back—so early."

No, he reassured himself, as he walked through the wet snow to Pierre's cabin, Rivard hadn't poisoned her mind yet.

Over the hot supper at Pierre's the two boys talked of the past winter.

"Pierre," said Alan at length as he pushed back his chair and lit his pipe, "you are my friend and will tell me. What did Rivard say when he came back with those strangers to the trade-room?"

A smile lit the broad face of the head *voyageur* as he answered: "He pull dose poleece ovair een de corner and whisper. He know Pierre ees your fr'en'."

"So they're Provincial Police from Quebec? Who are they after?"

Pierre shrugged. "I do not know; M'sieu Dessane tell dem you know de headwater country, you and Noel, so dey want you to guide dem."

"How did they get here?"

"Yesterday dey come een ovair de shore ice by dog-team. Dey got two half-breed wid dem—bad-lookin' feller."

"And Gabriel told them I was the man they wanted."

"Ah-ha, dey say dey pay you well to guide dem."

"Pay me well to guide them to John McCord!" thought Alan. Then he said: "Well, Noel and I are going up the coast for dogs. They'd better get some one else for a guide; I might lose the way."

IN his own house at the Hudson's Bay settlement, Alan and Noel were discussing the situation when the great dog lying at their feet lifted his head, then stalked to the door on stiff legs and sniffed at the crack. The eyes of the two men met as they nodded significantly. Shortly there were low voices out-

side which were answered by the sniffing dog with a snarl. There was a knock and a voice called:

"Tie up that man-eating husky, will you?"

Alan ordered Rough to lie down in a corner of the room, then opened the door. McQueen and Slade entered, casting furtive glances around for the dog.

"I don't like that dog," said McQueen. "Put him outside, will you? He might jump on us."

"Yes, he might. He's a good judge of men, that dog."

Alan realized that he was going pretty far. These men were Provincial Police, with wide powers. But they had not as yet identified themselves to him, and he had that excuse for his actions. He opened the door and let Rough out.

"We want a word with you alone," said McQueen.

"Noel, here, is my partner," replied Alan. "We have no secrets from each other."

"But you sometimes have a secret together, eh?" broke in Slade.

"We've got no time to lose," said McCord.

ALAN gazed blankly into Slade's eyes. Police or no, he didn't like these two. "Secret together—what do you mean?" he asked.

"Well, my lad, I'm kind of curious to know what a hunter just out of the bush is doing with a piece of Canadian paper money," said McQueen. "I suppose you got it from a bear."

To the horror of the watching Noel, Alan calmly produced his pouch from a pocket and drew out the bill.

"You mean this?"

Cameron's audacity took McQueen and Slade by surprise. The former hesitated, swallowed, then demanded excitedly: "Where upriver did you get that money? Who gave it to you?"

Alan yawned, then calmly surveyed the exasperated McQueen from head to foot. "When you show me what business it is of yours, I may tell you."

McQueen's pale eyes flamed with anger. "We're Provincial Police! Didn't you know that? You'd better keep a civil tongue in your head, young man!"

"Why didn't you tell me who you were?" countered Alan, reveling in the discomfiture of the thick-set officer. "Rivard didn't say a thing about it when I met you, and neither did you! I suppose you've got something to prove it?"

McQueen threw open his outer and inner coats, displaying a badge of German silver on his heavy shirt. "That satisfy you? I'm a sergeant of Provincial Police, Province of Quebec. I thought they'd told you. Slade, here, is a corporal."

"I haven't seen Gabriel since I got in, and Rivard said nothing about your being police," evaded Alan truthfully.

"Now will you tell us where you got that money?"

"I got that money from Neil Campbell, at Whale River, two years ago."

With a shrug and a smile of futility, McQueen turned to Slade. "Guess we'd better let these boys get some sleep," he said good-naturedly. "Then we'll have a talk with them."

"You'll have plenty of time to talk," said Alan. "After the ice from the upper river passes, the river will run high with snow-water for weeks. You'll have plenty of time."

THE vanguards of the marching spring reached Fort George and swept on up the East Coast of the great salt bay of the north. For weeks the wedges of the returning gray geese had daily etched the sky. High in the air the white banners of the battalions of the snow geese, called "wavies" in the north, had drifted past, bound for their nesting-grounds in far Arctic islands. Blue and Hutchin's geese, whistling swan, brant and crane, with the armies of the lesser fowl, duck and plover and snipe, daily followed the coast north.

It had been bitter news to Alan when Gabriel Dessane told him the details of the mission of the police.

"Alan, I don't blame you for being a little stiff before you knew who they were," said Gabriel, "but the law requires that we give the police any help possible. Their papers order us to furnish guides, supplies, whatever they require. They're after a man who went in to Nichicun by way of Rupert House, last summer—a man charged with murder."

Murder! John McCord with the straight-gazing eyes and the big heart, a murderer!

"His Indians came out at East Main in December—deserted him," continued Dessane. "He had hired them to go in with him to trade for fur. They came out to get dogs and supplies, but he wanted them to go into the interior this summer and they were afraid. That was his plan—to lose himself in the interior. That was why the police were suspicious when you dropped that bill; they suspected you might have run into him."

Alan's level eyes met the friendly gaze of the factor as he replied: "Yes, I understand. But I don't go upriver with these police. I've got to get some good dogs from the Huskies. That will take me weeks."

"Well, I'll tell Sergeant McQueen that you must get your dogs from the Eskimos first, if he insists on taking you to the headwaters instead of our Indians."

BEFORE dawn next day a nineteen-foot Peterboro canoe slipped from the shadowy shore below the darkened buildings of the Hudson's Bay post, rode the ebb tide down to the river mouth and turned north up the coast. On through the waning night in the windbreak of the coastal islands Alan and Noel pushed the big canoe, stopping only to free their paddles from the ice film that sheathed them and to beat the blood back into their stiff fingers.

On up the coast past the Little Whale and Richmond Gulf went the canoe on its quest for dogs. At the Nastapokas, where the ice pack had brought in the walrus, seal and polar bear from the north, Alan met the first of the Kogaluk Eskimos. There he traded his canoe-load of goods and groceries for three yearling Ungava puppies bred from a pair of superb huskies which had crossed from Hope's Advance on Ungava Bay with their owners. He had kept his promise to John McCord; he now had a team of Ungavas for the coming winter.

With his two slate-gray-and-white puppies, Powder and Shot, and their seal-brown-and-white brother called Rogue, Alan started back down the treacherous coast for Fort George.

SPRING trade was in full swing when the Peterboro turned into the river mouth at Fort George and rode the flood tide up to the Hudson's Bay settlement. Tepees of coast Crees and of wild Montagnais dotted the high shores at the old Hudson's Bay post, and upstream at the Revillon Frères and the Northern Trading Company. For two weeks had arrived the canoes of hunters from the far Lake of the Snows and the endless muskegs of the Valley of Bitter Water; from the Whispering Hills, beyond which no hunter had ever traveled into the unknown interior. Below the high shores squatted the skin tents of Eskimos from the Twin and Bear Islands and the north coast.

It was June, the Montagnais "Moon of Flowers," and for a space the shawled women with the somber eyes would forget the "Moons of the Long Snows" in ice-imprisoned valleys; forget the specter of the white death and the dread of starvation, while they sat in the sun, with their children romping with the dogs around them, and laughed and gossiped through the soft days of the spring trade.

As Alan and Noel stood on the high shore holding their nervous dogs by rawhide leashes to prevent a general fight with the post huskies, they had a caller.

"G'morning, Cameron!" called a voice. Alan looked up to recognize the thick-set figure of Sergeant McQueen behind the slabs of the gate. "You got your dogs, I see. Beauties, too! Nothing like them at Whale River."

"I got the pups in the Nastapokas, from a Husky," he answered, as the slate-gray Powder, pursued by Shot and the brown-patched Rogue circled him in a mad race, while Rough lay near at hand, watching through condescending, oblique eyes their childish antics.

"I want to talk with you, Cameron. When do we start upriver?"

For a space the eyes of the youth met the other's in a fixed stare. "In about a week," said Cameron.

"That suits me. I'll pay you and your man two dollars a day."

"What for?"

The close-set eyes of the policeman glittered as he said slowly: "To take us

to the spot where John McCord wintered —and you left him."

"You're crazy—crazy as a hermit wolf!" Cameron's face went hard as flint as he met the other's eyes. "I never met this McCord. I'm going to my hunting country to get in our winter fish."

With a shrug McQueen said: "Forget it, Cameron! All I want is for you to take me to the headwaters."

"I'm starting in about a week," repeated Alan. "Are your men strong-water men?"

"Yes, they're good river-men. Slade and I were brought up in a canoe."

"Good thing for you. There's some bad poling water on this river."

"Well, when you're ready to start, let me know," said McQueen.

"You'll be a month reaching the three forks, and you'll need three months' grub, for you might miss the caribou," said Alan, hoping to learn whether the police intended to outfit to winter in the interior or to return before the ice.

"Three months?" laughed the other, "Why, we're traveling in two canoes with flour for six months! We're taking our dogs in to come out on the snow if we don't get McCord this summer."

As Alan watched McQueen walk toward the Hudson's Bay store he said aloud: "You won't get John McCord, *any* summer! What a mess he'd make of you and Slade if you ever met him!"

For the information that McCord had killed his wife, Heather's mother, had somehow left Alan strangely insensible. His feeling toward the man whose hand he had gripped in a pledge of eternal friendship did not change. He could not convince himself that the blue-eyed giant he had left on the Talking River had done this thing. It was all a riddle not to be solved until he brought the bounding Powder, Shot and Rogue to the cabin of John McCord.

THE remaining days of his stay were busy ones for Alan. There were supplies to be carefully checked, all of which he bought with his credit at the post. The money McCord had given him he hid safely under the floor of his cabin. The extra flour, beans and sugar, Noel got through Montagnais, as well as the extra gill-net which might some day, in the heart of the unknown country, save their lives. Driven by longing of his heart, Alan went to the Revillon Frères post the day before his departure. Gabriel Dessane and Pierre were busy; but finishing his trade with an Indian, Gabriel Dessane approached Alan and gave him a hearty handshake. "How are you, Alan? They tell me you got the dogs you were after. Come outside where I can talk to you."

IN the empty clearing Dessane began: "You start with the police this week, McQueen tells me. That is good."

"Good?" protested Alan. "I can't help myself, can I?"

"No, but you put yourself in a bad light here, Alan. Everyone thinks you met this McCord."

"Do you?" Alan looked hard at him.

"You say you did not. For me that is sufficient." Dessane smiled inscrutably.

"I came to say good-by," said Alan. "You know how I feel toward Berthe. Do—do you object to my hoping—that some day—"

The older man placed his hand kindly on Alan's shoulder.

"There is much time yet, Alan. You are both young—too young. You have your way to make—"

"But Rivard, he's wasting no time," Alan demurred, vehemently. "Are you his friend or—mine?"

Dessane's face sobered. "Rivard is sent here by the Company. His family has influence. And there is Madame Dessane; she is very difficult."

"I see," replied Cameron. "I'm a poor man—a hunter, without a decent home to give her. Rivard will go up in the Company. I see—well, I'll go and say good-by if she'll see me."

Alan started to move away; then he turned to the older man. "I want to ask you a question. When you were at Fort Chimo did you ever hear of the River of Skulls?"

Dessane stood for a time with knit brows, seemingly groping deep in his memory. "I recall, now, an old Naskapi once told me about a River of Skulls where there had been a battle between the Huskies and the Indians," he answered. "They exterminated each other. And their spirits now moan in the gorge near which the fight took place. He said some of the bones and skulls are still found along the shore. But the Indians were afraid of this moaning gorge,—Manitou Gorge, the Gorge of the Spirits, as they called it,—and they avoided it."

"Was this river far in the interior, south of Chimo?"

"Oh, yes, deep in the caribou barrens. He said it was a branch of the Koksoak,

"This was a pistol-bullet. She has had to use her gun!" said Alan.

but no white man has ever been there. It's a country where even the Indians starve if they miss the deer migrations."

Alan bade the trader good-by, then, braving the stony face of Madame Dessane, went to say his farewell to Berthe.

"I am leaving in a few days," he said, probing her dark eyes in an attempt to read her thoughts. "I've come to say good-by, Berthe. But I can't go, with you feeling this way! It's all Rivard and this police business, I know. You don't understand—"

"Oh, it's not that! You're wrong! It's your suddenly going up the coast when you'd been away—so long! It's that you went away and did not tell me the truth. You couldn't care so much for me and do that." With a sob she rose, and flinging a faint "Good-by, Alan!" over her shoulder, hurried from the room. . . .

There were a few friends, only, on the beach at the Hudson's Bay Company to bid the discredited Alan Cameron and Noel good-by when they loaded their canoe for the long trip to the headwaters. But at the Revillon Frères, the entire population watched Trudeau and Goyette, McQueen's helpers, with two hired Montagnais canoemen, stow the outfit in the two police canoes. . . .

Three days upstream, where the Big River roars down from the high plateau in a series of falls and chutes, and the Indian trail for a hundred miles follows a chain of lakes, McQueen and Slade came to Alan's camp.

"We're going to see a lot of each other in the next few months," began the older officer; "why can't we shake hands on this and be friendly?"

"What do you mean, friendly?" demanded Alan, studying the insinuating close-set eyes of the other. "You're police. You can give me orders; I've got to obey them. What more do you want?"

"Young man," replied McQueen, after a pause, "you're a pretty deep one, you are. I wish I knew your game. But why can't we have an understanding?"

"We've got one, haven't we? When the Montagnais leave you at the Lake of the Winds, we take you up to the big forks."

"What then?"

"Well, then it's up to you. Noel and I are bound for our hunting-country up the Mad River. Where are you going?"

"We're going with you to get John McCord." McQueen leaned forward and stared hard into Alan's face.

"Have the Indians told you anything about this headwater country?" asked Alan, slowly stroking the head of Rough.

"Yes, we've been all over that. Finding a man there, would be like hunting for a needle in a haystack—if it wasn't that you know where he is."

Across the fire Noel moved uneasily.

Ignoring the statement, Alan said: "The Mad River, the Talking and the Conjuror join to make the three forks."

As Alan mentioned the Talking, Noel rose and hastily filling a tin cup from the tea-pail by the fire, swallowed the hot liquid in a gulp.

"There are fifteen or twenty good sized streams," Alan continued, ignoring his friend's attempts to warn him, "that drain into these, and they head in fifty or a hundred lakes—no one knows how many. You've taken on a big job, Sergeant McQueen—finding this man."

Day after day the men slaved at pole, paddle and tracking line as they ascended the great river. As the August days drew to a close and the nights sharpened with frost, the canoes reached the forks in the high tundra country. Northeast, three days' hard poling up the strong water of the Mad River, was Alan's hunting-country. Fifty miles to the east, on the Talking, stood a cabin in a clearing where a man waited with a girl for the

coming of a canoe. Far to the south, the great lakes Nichicun and Patemisk emptied into the Conjuror, the largest of the three branches.

The night the canoes reached the forks the police came to Alan's camp.

"Well, Cameron, we're here," said McQueen, with a sigh of satisfaction, lighting his pipe with a red ember from the supper fire. "Now it's up to you to decide whether you're going to stay stiff-necked and later pay the penalty of the law, or will decide to be sensible and talk."

"We've been all over this, Sergeant," demurred Alan with an air of indifference which belied the anxiety that harassed him. "It's not up to me. It's up to you. You say McCord is somewhere in this country. Now which river are you going to take to the height-of-land?"

McQueen's brows met, and his pale eyes glittered. "We're going to cover all three rivers before the ice," he snapped.

Alan glanced at Noel. There was not time to cover the wide headwaters of even one river before the ice. His heart pulsed in his throat as he asked with seeming indifference: "Which one first?"

"Your country's on this north branch, you say." McQueen leaned toward the other as he went on insinuatingly: "Well, young man, I figure that's just where you ran into McCord—in your own country."

Like a flash, inspiration came to Alan, and slowly over his bronzed face crept a look of frustration—of defeat. His eyes shifted before the fixed stare of the policeman as, expelling the breath from his lungs in a deep sigh, he horrified the listening Noel with: "What's the use! You're bound to get him before you're through—you police always do, they tell me. We met McCord last winter on the headwater lakes of the Mad River."

"He may not be there, now," suggested Alan, looking blankly at Noel. "He was camped in tents when we met him, waiting for his Indians to bring in dogs and stuff from East Main."

"Ha-ha!" roared McQueen. "He'll wait! If he only waits a little longer, he'll get a safe trip home, eh, Tom? Or a safe trip to hell, if he puts up a fight."

"He'll put up a fight," said Alan.

"Oh, yes, he'll fight! He's a whale of a man, and dangerous, but we'll surprise him—get him in his sleep. Tom and I'll handle that."

Alan looked doubtfully at McQueen's thick-set figure, then at the unimpressive Slade. "That's your only chance with John McCord," he said dryly, "—to surpraise him. How about the girl? Is she wanted, too?"

"Oh, no. The girl is not in this murder."

"He killed his wife?"

"Shot her down in cold blood."

At last the police left to cross to their camp. When they were well out of hearing on the moonlit river, Alan turned to Noel.

"It was our best chance," he said, "to send them up the Mad River. We'll take them into the Caribou Lake country and lose them, while one of us strikes cross country to the Talking and warns John. I was afraid, they'd want to try the Talking first, so I threw up my hands to head them off. It'll give John a chance to lose himself somewhere over the height-of-land before they come back here to the forks and start with their dogs to hunt for him on the first snow."

"W'at dey do wid us—dose poleece, w'en dey see we fool dem?"

"This will make us outlaws, Noel—helping a man wanted for murder!"

ON the Indian's swart features there was a lightning-swift transition from a look of pained surprise to one of stoic acquiescence. Gravely he nodded agreement with Alan's startling admission.

"Ah-hah! So that's it, is it?" With a grunt of satisfaction the delighted McQueen thrust out his big hand and gripped Alan's. "Now you're talking like a good citizen, my boy!" he cried, slapping Alan on the back. "Tomorrow we'll head up this Mad River for the lakes! Well, Jack McCord," he cried, waving his clenched hands above his head, then wringing the fist of the grinning Slade, "at last we've got you!"

CHAPTER IV

THE Montagnais "Moon of the Falling Leaves" was riding the sky above the tundra-sentineled valley of the Talking River. The days of the long twilights were over, and earlier and earlier the swarming stars stippled the violet sky. One September morning a girl stood on the shore of the river beside a path leading back through the timber to a clearing. She wore heavy whipcord breeches, laced below the knee, high woolen socks and moccasins. Near her, bottom up on the beach, lay a big canoe, and stretched on a row of low alders, a

gill-net dried in the sun. As she stood gazing across the rushing river, she made out a dark object moving on the opposite shore downstream, appearing, only to disappear again among willows and alders.

"A bear!" Slowly her mouth opened in surprise as she stared at the opposite shore. "But it's not a bear! It's—a dog! It's— Roughy! Roughy!" she cried.

Like a statue, on the opposite shore stood a black husky with white face markings, chest and socks, intently watching her.

"Roughy! Roughy!" she called, frantically waving her arms at the motionless animal, while tears blurred her eyes. "Oh, they're back! Alan's back! He didn't forget us! Alan's back!"

The watching dog went quick with life. With a wild yelping he plunged into the swift river, his powerful legs driving him like piston rods. Keeping abreast of him as the current carried him downstream, the girl followed the shore, calling to him. His feet touched bottom, and with a lunge, he was out.

"Roughy, dear old Roughy! Where's Alan, boy?"

With a shake the great dog sent the water flying, then froze as if carved from stone, ears forward, nostrils working, as he studied her through oblique eyes.

"Roughy, don't you know Heather?"

He reached her with a bound, sniffed at her outstretched hands, then rearing, as he whined his recognition, beat her shoulders with his great paws while his red tongue sought her face.

"Who-hoo-o-o! Heather!" a call drifted across the water. There on the stony shore stood a man, a tump-line across his forehead supporting the pack on his back. Beside him romped three huge dogs.

Heather waved in return, her knees shaking with excitement and the joy of seeing him: "Who-hoo-o-o, Alan!"

Running to the canoe, she turned it and, lifting it by the gunwale, slid it into the stream and paddled hard.

"You—you kept your word! You didn't forget us?" she choked, winking back the tears as the boat grounded.

Alan dropped his pack and seized both the girl's hands as he swung her from the canoe.

"Oh, Dad'll be so glad, Alan! He was beginning to think—"

Cameron's bronzed features sobered as he thought of the police he had left over on the Mad headwaters. "But you, Heather, you knew I'd keep my word?"

She nodded: "Yes, I knew. And oh, you got your dogs, and what beauties!" she cried as the three Ungavas thrashed in the water of the shore.

LATER as the savory odors of corn-bread, caribou and tea filled the cabin, the fierce yelping of the Ungavas brought Alan on a run to the clearing.

"Call off your dogs! By the Lord Harry, Alan Cameron, you're a partner after my own heart! Look at those pups! Welcome back, my lad!" The great voice of John McCord boomed at Alan as he quieted the younger dogs.

"There's your dogs," grinned Alan, "straight from the Nastapokas. Like 'em?"

"Like 'em?" cried the delighted McCord. "They're beauties! Now you and I own the world!"

Alan searched the blue eyes of the older man. Could it be true that John McCord was a murderer—a man who would kill his wife?

"You've forgotten one thing, John," he finally said. "The police!"

McCord's brows knotted beneath the gashed forehead. "Police? What have the police to do with us?"

So honest was the look that met Alan's searching eyes, that he hesitated, perplexed, and did not answer.

"You must tell me your story over a pipe," went on McCord. "Let's eat first."

"Wait. I—I don't want Heather to hear it all, John."

The big man stared hard. "What's on your mind, boy? You haven't been followed from Fort George? They don't know I'm here?"

Alan nodded. "That's just it. The police do know; they're looking for you."

McCord thrust his puzzled face close to Alan's. "The police? For *me?* I don't understand."

"John," said Alan, "when I was at the Revillon Frères, I accidentally dropped a bill you gave me."

"Well, suppose you did? You didn't tell anyone where you got it?"

"No, but the police saw it."

The big man scratched his head, then turned an uncomprehending look on the other. "You say there are police at Fort George looking for me? What am I wanted for?"

"Murder."

Alan watched the other's eyes as a lynx watches a wood mouse. But a look of blank amazement was their sole expression. "Who've I murdered?"

"That's why I wanted to keep it from Heather. They say at Fort George that you killed your wife."

McCord looked dumbfounded. "Murdered—my wife? Why, Alan, my wife died years ago—while I was in service overseas! What's behind this charge?"

Alan waited as his friend paced to and fro, deep in thought.

"Where's Noel?" McCord suddenly demanded, stopping his pacing.

"I left him with the police in the headwater country of the Mad River. I slipped them and traveled overland with the dogs."

John McCord scowled into Alan's somber face. "The police came with you upriver?"

Alan nodded. Then, drawing McCord back beyond earshot of the cabin, he swiftly related what happened on his trip to Fort George. As he talked, the face of the older man slowly changed from a picture of frank amazement to one of stark rage.

"Before I begin, I want to ask you a question," said McCord, trying for self-control. "Did you believe the story that I had killed my wife?"

"That was not the question," retorted Alan. "You had saved my life. You were here with Heather, alone, deserted by your Indians. I had given you my promise to come back."

McCord's blue eyes lit with satisfaction. "You were going to keep your word, whether it was with a wife-killer or not, eh?"

"I wouldn't think about it. There was Heather, alone with you, needing help. You had saved my life."

"Partner, give me your hand."

The two men gripped hands as their eyes met unwaveringly. Then: "You're hungry; so am I. We'll go in and eat. Later we'll take the net up to the island and set it. We've got four big dogs to feed now. Then I'll tell you a story."

IT was a happy girl who repeatedly filled the plates of the hungry men with caribou ribs, corn-bread and beans while Alan told of his trip up the coast in search of the dogs. Of Fort George he spoke little. Afterward Alan paddled with McCord up to the island and set the gill-net in the thoroughfare on the side of the nearest shore, where the fish traveled at night. Then, lighting their pipes, the two sat down on two small boulders facing each other.

"First I want to know about the police and Noel, and how you got away with the dogs," said McCord.

"I told them we had met you in the headwater lakes of the Mad River. So Noel and I took them there. We always camped with water between us, to keep the dogs apart. Four nights back Noel started for the forks with the canoe, and at daylight I struck straight south cross-country with the dogs to warn you. And here I am."

McCord's eyes shone with approval. "Here you are, and you've walked with a heavy pack through hell to get here."

"No, I had to circle some lakes and swamp country, but I had little trouble making it. Tomorrow we must drop downstream to help Noel upriver with that canoe-load."

McCord nodded. "You left them, you say, where they couldn't find their way back to the main stream without a guide, in weeks?"

Alan laughed. "That country's a network of lakes and muskeg. They're likely to get into Whale water and be on their way to Lake Bienville before they find out their mistake. They'll be lucky if they don't strike the freeze-up before they get out."

"Good boy! You did a good job on them, Alan. Now let's get back to Fort George. This Sergeant McQueen, as he calls himself, would be about five feet, ten. He's thick-set and rugged, carries his head a little forward, and what you'd notice about his face, is a mean mouth and faded blue eyes—too close together."

Alan's jaw dropped in amazement. "Why! You—you must know him?"

McCord exhaled a cloud of tobacco smoke as his eyes wrinkled in an amused look. "I ought to know him," he said dryly. "I had to look at that face for two years or more."

"And Slade—you know him too?"

"Let's see, Sanford—well, you know him as Slade—would go a little over six feet, medium build, sandy hair and blue eyes; the thing you'd notice about him are his hands and feet—they're too large, and somehow you always notice them."

Alan nodded. "That's right! You do. That's Slade all right!"

"So much for these officers of the law," sneered McCord. "Alan, *those birds are not police!*"

Cameron's jaw dropped as he stared at the other's grinning face.

"Not police? But I don't understand. They had regular Government papers—signed in Quebec, identifying them and

"If you knew how you look—" began Alan.

ordering all fur-posts to give them assistance. I made McQueen show me his badge. They must be—"

McCord threw back his head and blew a great cloud of smoke from his mouth. "Those papers were forged! These men are looking for me, all right, Alan, my lad, but they're not police."

"And you're not wanted by the Government?"

McCord slowly shook his blond head.

"It's wonderful, John, wonderful—to know you're not a wanted man!" Alan cried. "I'm as dazed as a bear in a deadfall! I can't believe it! It's too good to be true! McQueen—Slade, putting it on Fort George that way! What a joke!"

McCord drew a deep breath and began to speak unreservedly.

"Not knowing what I was, you stuck by me through gratitude, pity for Heather, and the fact that we had pledged each other our friendship," he said. "I knew what you were when I first looked into your face, Alan. I knew you'd stand by. You have. Now I want you to hear my story."

And so, there, on the shore of the Talking, John McCord told Alan why he had come into the heart of Labrador, bringing a girl of seventeen on a strange quest.

THE years preceding the World War had found him living in a small town in Ontario with a young wife and their little daughter Heather. Then the war broke out and he had gone overseas.

For two years he served in the same battalion with a man who had been a prospector and had talked much of his wanderings from the Yukon to Labrador. After Messines Ridge, where he got the ugly gash on his forehead, McCord found himself in the same hospital with his friend Aleck Drummond. In Montreal, before the war, Drummond had met a Hudson's Bay man who had once been stationed at Fort Chimo, at the mouth of the great Koksoak River which rises somewhere in the heart of Labrador and flows north into Ungava Bay.

"I SEE, now, why you asked me to talk to Dessane about the Koksoak and the River of Skulls," interrupted Alan.

"Wait a minute and you'll understand," replied McCord.

The fur man had been told by some wild Naskapi, who once came to the post, of a branch of the Koksoak called the River of Skulls, because of a battle below a gorge there between Koksoak Eskimos and Naskapi, in which they had wiped each other completely out. Later, when some Indians found the bodies, they were afraid to bury them because of the moaning of the spirits of the dead in the gorge above. So the skulls and bones lay strewn along the shore and flats. After this the Indians called it the River of Skulls, and the gorge, the Gorge of the Spirits, Manitou Gorge.

"That's exactly the same story Dessane told me about it," observed Alan.

"Yes, but listen!" returned McCord.

One year some Naskapi, more daring than the rest, were camped on the sand flats that reach a long way below this gorge, spearing caribou, for the deer were crossing here and the Indians overcame their fear of the spirits to get the deer. They had built a fire against the roots, full of clay and gravel, of a spruce that had come downstream and grounded on the shore. The heat of the fire softened the blue clay stuck to the roots, and one of the Indians noticed some small stones, as he thought, in the clay. He was toying with them when he realized that the small stones were much too heavy for stones. He scraped off the clay, and on pounding them found them malleable and dull yellow in color. These he brought to Chimo and showed to the Hudson's

Bay people. They were nuggets of pure gold. But none of the company men could get away for a gold-hunt into the interior. It was a long chance, anyway. This story the Hudson's Bay man told to Drummond.

The following year the supply ship of the Company brought Aleck Drummond to Fort Chimo. There they warned him he would never reach the mythical River of Skulls, and if he did, he would starve because he couldn't hunt for gold and caribou at the same time. And he'd have to find the deer or starve. But Aleck reached the River of Skulls and he found gold, and didn't starve.

"You mean to tell me that he poled and tracked hundreds of miles into the interior, found gold and got out to Chimo before the ice?" demanded the doubtful Alan, thrilled with anticipation of what was coming.

"I do. If you'd known Aleck, you'd realize that he was one of the few men who could have done it."

"He must have had a streak of luck with the deer."

"He did. And he had a streak of luck locating the River of Skulls. It looked at first," went on McCord, "as if he wouldn't find the river. He got into several, but finally followed a trail of blue clay and rusty quartz up a river and came to an alluvial flat below a gorge. The river was full of sand and gravel bars, and he dug out some skulls and bones. Then he went to work panning the bars and struck it rich. Late in September when the snow was falling and the small lakes frozen, he worked with his pan below that gorge, and as luck would have it, part of the deer migration crossed below him. So he shot meat for his trip to Chimo. But he didn't show at the post the dust and nuggets he had in his pack-bags, and he would not admit he had found the river. An accident to the ship which delayed her return from Hudson's Bay saved him from wintering at Chimo, and he reached Montreal. Then, before he could find men with the nerve to travel with him to this River of Skulls and bring out a fortune, the war broke out."

"How much dust and nuggets did he manage to bring back with him?" demanded the excited Cameron.

"Around twenty thousand dollars' worth to show for a few weeks' panning."

"Twenty thousand dollars?"

"Yes. You see he'd struck a regular bonanza. He took a lot of heavy nuggets out of those sand-bars. And he didn't scratch the surface. The river had been washing that gold downstream from open quartz veins in the rock from possibly as far as a hundred miles above, for centuries."

McCord continued his story as Alan refilled and lit his pipe:

Through their convalescence McCord and Drummond studied the sketch-map that the latter had carried on his body through the war, and made plans for the long journey into Ungava on their return. With them in the hospital were two men of their own battalion who had enlisted under the names of Maddock and Sanford, and who manifested marked curiosity in the whispered conversation of the two friends. One day as John and Drummond were comparing Aleck's sketch with a map of Labrador they had obtained from London, they looked up to find Jim Maddock,—now calling himself McQueen,—who had approached on slippered feet, staring over their shoulders.

"What did you do?" demanded the indignant Alan.

"What could we do in a hospital, except send him about his business?"

"So that's where Mr. McQueen comes in, eh?"

"Yes, he and his partner Sanford, known as Slade."

The last week of McCord's stay in the hospital, Drummond had had a second operation, from which he died. Before he became unconscious, he gave McCord his sketch map and his blessing.

"So that's how you happen to be on the Talking River?"

"Yes."

"You decided to go in from the headwaters of the Koksoak—if you could find them?"

"Yes."

"But we may starve before we find the headwaters of the Koksoak."

"Let me finish my story; then we can go into that," said McCord, knocking his pipe out on his moccasin.

ON their return to Canada after the war, McQueen had hunted him up and made repeated overtures to be taken as a partner on the expedition he knew McCord contemplated. Then McCord heard that McQueen had often been seen near the house where the child Heather —whose mother had died during McCord's absence—lived with her grandmother McCord. Evidently, if John McCord boarded the supply ship of the Hudson's Bay Company or of the Re-

villon Frères, bound for Chimo and the River of Skulls, McQueen would be a fellow-passenger.

But he had no intention of going to Chimo and have his secret shortly known to the world. The strike was a bonanza. The short working season of one summer would hardly touch the placer gold in those sand-bars. So McCord decided to keep the strike a secret by avoiding Fort Chimo and attempting to establish a base somewhere on the headwaters of the great river, where they could renew their supplies from the east coast of Hudson's Bay and pretend to carry on a trade with the Indians.

"WELL, John," broke in Alan, shaking his head doubtfully. "I must admit you're a cool one. Where do you plan to winter if we locate this River of Skulls and collect some dust? At this cache on the headwaters?"

"Exactly, or return here, if we can make it. But let me finish my story first, before we go into the future."

When he had decided how he would try to reach the River of Skulls and keep his secret, McCord had worked a number of years in the lumber business and the Rouyn quartz-mines to make enough money to finance his expedition. Finding no suitable white man who would undertake the gamble with him, he at last decided to hire Indian *voyageurs* from Ontario, withholding the real purpose of his venture until they found the Koksoak.

But there was Heather. For months, deaf to his arguments and entreaties, the girl who had often joined him on his prospecting trips into the Northern bush, and had grown tall and strong, able to handle rifle, canoe and dogs as well as a boy, had insisted on going with him. The death of his mother decided it. He preferred subjecting Heather to the dangers involved in a search for the River of Skulls, to leaving her without protection. So, in the previous summer, John McCord had started from Rupert House with Heather and his crew of Ojibways to find the headwaters of the Koksoak and the gold sands of the River of Skulls.

"Do you understand, now, why I wanted you for my partner?" he asked.

Alan sat, brows furrowed in thought. Then he asked: "How did you get away without McQueen finding out that you'd come by Hudson's Bay?"

"I fooled them. They knew that I hadn't arranged to sail last summer on either the Hudson's Bay Company's or the Revillon Frères' supply ship that stops at Chimo, and heard that I was in the Hurricanaw bush with Heather, prospecting. I took good care that they would hear it. It couldn't have been until sometime in the winter that they learned we had gone to Moose and in from Rupert House. Knowing that I was somewhere in this big headwater country, they came to Fort George to get Indian guides and ran into you. As police they could command any kind of aid, so they carried forged paper."

"They might not be here now if I hadn't dropped that bill."

"Yes, they would. They know where we're headed, and this is the way there." McCord's eyes suddenly went hard and cold as he said, bitterly: "Now it's war to the knife, Alan! I've worked years to get here, and if Jim McQueen and his pair of half-breeds try to follow us to the Koksoak to steal our gold, I'll wipe them out as I would vermin."

Alan rose, thrust out his hand and gripped the one that met his.

"The River of Skulls or—bust!" he cried. "But we ought to send Heather back to Fort George, John, before we start inland."

McCord slowly shook his head. "It would break her heart."

LEAVING Rough with Heather, Alan and John took the young dogs and dropped downstream to meet Noel at the forks and bring his heavy cargo up the strong water of the Talking River.

When the sudden chill of the early September dusk settled on the river valley and Rough had had his supper, he followed Heather into the cabin, and lay on the floor at her feet. Suddenly he raised his head, ears pointed and nostrils working. Then he stalked to the door, sniffed through the crack at the bottom, and sucked his breath in a low snarl.

Shortly, came a voice from outside: *"Kekway! Kekway!"*

Heather froze where she stood grasping her rifle. Indians! It was the Montagnais salutation to friends or strangers. Did they know she was here alone?

Then Heather got control of her nerves. These men had come in the night to a camp. By the law of the North, from Labrador to Alaska, they would be welcomed and fed, if they were hungry. She must tie Rough up, open the door and see what they wanted.

Fairly dragging the reluctant husky from the door, she secured him to the

spruce upright of the bunk with a rawhide cord, then lifted the crossbar and opened the door, still holding her cocked rifle.

"Kekway!" she called as the faint light from the single candle illuminated the doorway.

FROM the gloom of the clearing came the query: "You tie husky?"

"Yes, he's tied up! Who are you?" Heather demanded in the calmest tones she could muster.

"Hunter from Conjur' Rivière!" came the reply in the unmistakable voice of an Indian. "We roll cano' een rapide—lose all meat. Water spoil flour."

Two blurred figures emerged from the murk of the clearing to stand in the dim light from the doorway. Inside, the angry Rough filled the room with his snarls.

"Where's your canoe—your camp?" she asked, doubtful of this story of a capsize in the rapids above the camp.

"We save cano' an' mak' fire on de shore, here. Den we fin' path. Eet was dark—we not see eet, before."

The light from the door lit the swart faces of the Montagnais. Heather had seen many Indians but there was something in the mink-like eyes of these men she did not like.

"You are hungry?" she asked.

The older of the two men nodded. "Enh-enh, yes! W'ere ees man?"

"Three men," she quickly replied. "They come back tonight!"

"Ah-ha!" The Indians exchanged significant glances. Men did not travel at night in the bush or on swift rivers.

"Come inside and I'll give you some supper." The men were hungry. There was no other way, thought Heather. They were unarmed except for their skinning knives. If they acted queerly, she'd cut Rough's leash—and she had her pistol. While the Indians ate ravenously, she sat with apparent calm on the bunk beside the fretting husky.

When the Montagnais had emptied the tea-kettle and cleared the table of food, the older man turned to the girl.

"Put de husky out. We sleep here!" he brazenly ordered.

The blood boiled in the girl's veins at the insolence, as she rose to her feet.

"You sleep at your camp!"

"Our blankeet ees wet. We sleep here!" insisted the other with a scowl. "Put husky out; he ees cross!"

Then moving nearer to the girl, whose right hand stole to her hip pocket, the younger Indian reached to touch her hair, as he said: "Eet ees lak' de sun."

But as she drew back from the hand approaching her head, there was a snarl from the bunk across the room, and launched by sturdy iron-muscled legs, Rough's hundred and forty pounds of bone and sinew catapulted into his collar, snapping the rawhide leash like paper. Again the dog leaped, carrying the young Indian screaming to the floor as the older man disappeared through the door. Again and again the infuriated husky struck with his great tusks at the defending arms of the panic-stricken Indian. Then Heather threw herself upon the dog, and with a desperate wrench on his collar, fell with him sidewise to the floor. Momentarily freed from the dog, with a leap the Indian shot through the half-open door, pulling it shut behind him as he passed. Breaking loose from the girl, the maddened husky crashed into the closed door an instant too late and bounded back to the floor. His blood at white heat, Rough raged with tooth and claw at the shut door, until the panting girl drew him away and dropped the bar in its place.

"You old wolf!" she cried. "He's bitten all right, but I don't think seriously! But how did you snap that rawhide leash without breaking your neck?"

Rough's hairy throat rumbled as if in protest at her interference. Then he went to the door, sucked in a deep breath as his black nostrils tested the cracks, and lay down to a night-long vigil. . . .

When Alan and McCord arrived with Noel and the two canoes and Heather told of the Montagnais and their rout by the infuriated Rough, the indignant men stared at each other in disgust.

"And to think," groaned McCord, "we staked that pair to grub when we met them on the river! I want to see them show up here again."

THAT night, while Heather listened, the three men went into their plans for the winter. There was, indeed, much work to be done if Alan and Noel were to find a water trail to the Koksoak in the spring.

"When are you leaving for the Sinking Lakes?" asked Heather of Alan, who sat at the table poring over the much-handled sketch map of Aleck Drummond and comparing it with McCord's government map of Labrador.

"Tomorrow," he answered. "We've got no time to lose. If Noel and I strike

the last of the migration, we've got to cache all the meat we can get, then later build a cache on these Koksoak headwaters we're going to find, and leave a supply of food. This will be our emergency cache when we come up the river over the ice in the fall with that gold."

"You seem pretty sure of finding the Koksoak headwaters and the gold," she replied doubtfully.

"Of course. We've got to be, Heather, or we'd never dare to make the try."

The girl gave a little shiver.

"Somehow I've got the feeling that we're never coming back—that we're going to starve or drown in the rapids, or the Naskapi will get us."

"Here, here, what's all this talk?" John turned from the fireplace where he had been shaping birch ax-helves with a draw-knife. "Is this my big girl who sent the Indians about their business? Of course we're coming back. We're going to meet that deer migration and come up the Koksoak next fall with so much gold and meat on the sled that—"

"Suppose de spirit scare away de deer from Rivière of Skull," interrupted Noel, who was plaiting dog harness, his dark face foreboding, "w'at we do den?"

Alan looked up from his maps to grin at John. "Why, then we'd have to eat the spirits in the Moaning Gorge, Noel."

ONE morning, ten days after Alan and Noel left for the Sinking Lakes, Heather, who had been busy gathering a supply of berries for the winter, took the pack bag, in which she carried them, and her rifle and started for the barren above the valley. It was a keen day in late September. The floor of the forest was yellow with the leaves of birch and aspen. Each night the frost whitened the tundra moss and thickened the ice in the small ponds, but the strong running river would not yield and close until the waning of the Freezing Moon.

Leaving the valley for an hour, she walked across the treeless tundra, gray with caribou moss, like velvet to the feet, and splashed with patches of low growing blueberries, bake-apple, moss and cranberries. But she did not stop until she came to a fold in the barren, a little valley or swale where, shielded from the wind, dwarf spruce, juniper and deer bush gallantly battled for existence. Here the berries grew in profusion and of larger size than out on the open tundra. She had almost filled her bag and was seated eating her lunch of bannock sandwiches when the slight breeze carried a sound to her ears that straightened her where she sat, every muscle tense as wire—the sound of men's voices!

She crept to some ground juniper and edged in under its spreading branches.

Watching both shoulders of the narrow valley, at last she saw the owners of the voices. Two men, carrying guns, were walking along the rim of the swale, talking excitedly. Nearer and nearer they came, until hardly a stone's throw distant on the lip of the valley, above her, they stopped. For a space, a thickset white man with a beard argued heatedly with his companion, an Indian.

"The man Rough mauled that night!" she decided, trembling where she lay. "But who is the other one? What's a white man doing here on the Talking?"

Shortly they moved on; after they disappeared she made her way home.

REACHING the Sinking Lakes, Alan and Noel worked to the limit of strength against the coming of the Freezing Moon that in October would ride high over the barrens.

Day by day the platform fish-cache, mounted on high, peeled spruce saplings, ringed with inverted cod-hooks to baffle climbing wolverines, received the night's catch of the two gill-nets. Great lake trout, the Montagnais *kokomesh,* "the fish that swallows everything," some running to twenty pounds in weight, whitefish, jackfish or northern pike, red and gray suckers, and ling, came to the nets; but it would require an enormous supply of fish to feed the four big Ungavas through the winter months, and there were four people besides.

Deep in the spruce and tamarack swamps that circled some of the chain of Sinking Lakes and gave them their name, Alan and Noel were much relieved to find scattered bands of caribou that had lingered behind the migration to winter in the valley. Before the October freeze-up closed the river and the large lake on which they were camped, the boys made a hurried visit to the McCords with a canoe-load of trout and meat, and the piebald skins of young caribou to be turned into hooded parkas and moccasins. There news awaited them.

"Boys," announced McCord as they sat down to supper, "Heather had a pretty close call last week."

"What d'you mean?" demanded Alan.

Heather then described the two men she had seen on the barren.

"McQueen and the Indian that Rough went after!" exclaimed Alan. "So McQueen, after all, reached the forks and ran into the Montagnais!" he commented. "Sure they didn't see you, Heather, when you left the valley?"

"Yes, it was almost dark when I came down across the barren."

"By gar, I don' see how dem people got out of de Mad headwater so soon!" exclaimed Noel.

"Well, they did," replied Alan. "Now what are we going to do about it?"

"Not a thing," said John McCord. "You've got those pups to break to a tandem hitch, your trap-lines to cover, and meat to hunt until the snow is right for you to search for the headwaters. We've got to stay here, with the grub. McQueen might be crazy enough to bother me this winter, try to get the map, but I doubt it. He'll wait. Our trouble will come in the spring."

"You promise that you and Heather will always keep together after this—no leaving each other? You'll always pack your guns?"

"We'll be careful," said McCord. . . .

Rapidly the winter shut in and the frost strengthened. Farther and farther out the ice sheet reached in the lake and near the shore it became so thick that they raised their nets. But the big cache was now piled high with frozen fish. The Moon of the Hoar Frost came, when the frozen moisture in the air sparkled like myriad diamonds in the sun, "*poudre* days," as the French call them, and the snow made deeper and deeper in the valleys as the "drifters" from Hudson's Straits swept over the tundra. And during this month the boys hunted far into the swamps of the upper valley to bring back caribou meat to be pounded into pemmican, and marrow from the round bones, which they stored in bags for emergency rations. Twice when the river closed they drove the dogs down to the cabin on the Talking, to find all well with John and Heather.

THEN, at last, came the Montagnais "Moon When the Snow Hangs in the Trees," and in the middle of December Alan and Noel started with the dogs to search for the headwater lakes of the Koksoak.

Over the barrens flanking the valley of the Sinking Lakes they traveled into the northeast. But it was a long-faced Noel who trotted behind the eager dogs over the sparkling tundra.

"The deer are crossing!" cried Napayo.

"No one evair go into dis countree and come back," he reminded Alan as they stood on a high barren and gazed over the undulating white waste to the north and east, seemingly aflame as the sun slanted across its limitless expanse.

"Well," said Alan, dropping his mitten slung to his neck by a thong and wiping the rime from his face with a bare hand, "some one always has to be first."

For days they traveled north of the valley of the Sinking Lakes, but in that direction, beyond the dim blue hills they had often seen from the valley, they found no watercourses flowing north, no headwater lakes.

The following morning they headed into the southeast. In the sparsely wooded valleys snow-white Arctic hares, their

long ears tipped with black, jumped from willow thickets to race away at the coming of the dog-team. Once, at a distance, three white foxes danced grotesquely on the snow, inspecting the approach of the team, until the dogs, getting their scent, set up a frenzied yelping which drove them away over the tundra like wisps of white smoke.

Because of the wood, the boys stopped in a small valley, where a stream headed, to boil their kettle. After eating, they continued south and came out of the fold in the hills to higher country. As Alan, who was leading the team, reached the lip of the valley and looked into the east, he raised his hands with a shout.

"Noel!" he cried. "Look at that lake over there! We've found it!"

Noel joined him and the two gazed in amazement across the tundra. There, miles away to the east, beyond the low hills, reached the level, white shell of an enormous lake, until it was lost in the haze of the distance.

"Why, it's as big as Lake Bienville on the Great Whale, Noel!" exclaimed Alan. "This must be one of the lakes in the old men's tales."

The Indian stood in awe gazing at the white reaches of the distant lake. Far to the north and south stretched the shimmering expanse of snow and wind-scoured ice, and into the east, until it merged with the horizon.

"Eet ees ver' beeg lak'," he said. "Big rivière flow out of dis."

"And that river must be a headwater of the Koksoak!" cried Alan. "We're over the height-of-land, the rivers all run north, here! We've found it, Noel! We've found it!"

That night the boys camped on the shore of the great lake in the windbreak of a stand of black spruce. While the dogs lay curled in the sleep-holes, Alan and Noel talked beside the fire.

"We'll travel right around this lake until we find the outlet, Noel. Then we'll hunt to find a way to get into it with the canoes from the Sinking Lakes."

"Mebbe dis lak' not flow into de beeg rivière."

"Noel, this lake is surely the headwaters of the big river or one of its branches. It's got to be, flowing north as the river does. And we'll soon find out."

Snug in their caribou sleeping-bags, the tired boys slept beside their fire. In the morning they woke to find the air thick with driving snow.

FOR three days the drifter pounded the barrens, driving every living thing, furred or feathered, to the sanctuary of the spruce or to burrows in the snow. The morning of the fourth day when the sun, flanked by two brass balls of sundogs or false suns, lifted above the horizon while the skies to the north and west were still a dense blue-black, the wind had died. With the stinging air shot with glittering snow crystals, their frozen breaths trailing behind them like smoke, men and dogs started for the head of the lake. Along the shores the wind had heaped huge drifts but much of the lake ice had been scoured of snow. Camping at the head of the lake, the following day they started over the new snow for the shoulders of the nearest hill. Everywhere, the night before, the wild creatures had traveled in search of food after the storm. Mice and lemmings, leaving their burrows, had mapped the snow with their tiny trails. The tracks of Arctic hare and ptarmigan, followed by the footprints of the white foxes hunting them, tantalized the noses of the dogs. In places signs on the snow marked where those white assassins of the air, snowy owl and gyrfalcon, had catapulted like stones from a sling upon some unsuspecting hare or ptarmigan. A wolverine had loped through the scrub sinking deeply at every stride, leaving a furrowed trail, while farther on the large feet of a lynx had supported him like snowshoes as he trotted on the trail of a fleeing fox. Canada jays croaked greetings from the naked limbs of aspen and balsam poplar, and friendly black-capped chickadees, gallant little souls who defied the withering cold, hailed the travelers with liquid gurgles and chuckling notes.

At last Alan discovered a water-route from the Sinking Lakes, by way of a chain of ponds lying on the height-of-land, to the big lake. The object of their exploring trip was accomplished.

NOW the Montagnais' "Great Moon" of January, with its searing winds and nights, when lake ice split with the boom of muffled artillery, and the spruce snapped under the contraction of the frost, rode over the barrens, followed by the "Moon of the Eagle." Night after night the aurora lit the white tundra, and streamers of pearly mist writhed across the heavens beneath stars that shone through with a spectral blue. "Spirits of the Dead at Play," the Eskimos call the dancing lights of the polar heavens.

More than once during the winter McCord crossed strange snowshoe trails. Some were the bear-paw prints of the Montagnais and some the long shape of the coast Cree. The cabin on the Talking was being watched. McQueen was biding his time—waiting to follow the canoe that would start in the spring. . . .

With May the high barrens began to wake from their winter's sleep. Shoulders of tundra thrust through their white blankets to expose lilac-green pastures of caribou moss. Snow buntings and Lapland longspur nested beside streams still sealed with ice. Daily the sun flashed from white battalions of wavies and swan bound for the ponds of Baffin Land, and wedges of Canadas again followed the airways of the sky. In the thickets of the valley of the Talking, where the snow was making its last stand, white-crowned and white-throated sparrows sang. In the aspen and red river willows, where the buds were swelling, flashed olive-backed and Magnolia warblers. Riding the brown snow-water, after the ice left the Talking, came Alan and Noel in the canoe they had taken to the Sinking Lakes on the sled.

"It will be June before the ice leaves the big lake," said Alan, "but we can take our stuff in the two canoes to the head of it and be ready to start when it does."

"Yes," agreed McCord, "we've got no time to lose."

ITS honey-combed ice flooded with pools of water, and entirely open in wide areas, from which rose clouds of vapor, the great lake spread under the June sun, to the hills dim on the eastern horizon. For days the big canoe had waited while three men and a girl watched its frozen shell soften and break up. At last the south wind and the high June sun cleared the lake of its rotting raft-ice; and the big Peterboro in which they were to make the voyage reached the hidden cache at the outlets. There the precious bags of flour, beans and pemmican which they were to leave with the extra canoe, were wrapped in tarpaulin and stored on the high platform.

The freshet water dropped rapidly, and Alan and Noel returned one night from an inspection of the central outlet, which they were to follow, with the news that the river was now passable for a canoe. Following their daily custom, the boys climbed to the nearest high ground to sweep the lake with their glasses.

Building a moss smudge fire, for the mosquitoes were merciless, they waited for sunset. When the sun had been swallowed by the tundra, the sky slowly flushed with rose, which was caught and held in the limitless mirror of the lake.

For an hour, while Rough and the puppies ran snowshoe rabbits in the scrub below them, the two men watched the unrippled miles of water reaching to the south, broken only by the antics of red-throated loons. With their heads wound with netting and sitting in the smoke of the smudge they fought the vicious thrusts of the mosquitoes as they watched the lake. At last, miles to the south, Alan's glasses picked up something of interest.

"W'at you see?" demanded Noel.

He handed the binoculars to Noel and waited for the Indian's verdict.

"Ah-hah!" grunted Noel. "Camp smoke!"

"Smoke hanging over that spruce point all right, but whose smoke? McQueen's or the Naskapi's?"

"De Naskapi hunt deer on de barren. Dat ees McQueen."

Back at camp McCord listened to the news. "Right on our heels, eh!"

Shortly after daylight the Peterboro slid into the slant of the first drop of the outlet on its long voyage north. Past shores rimmed with red willows and alders, behind which the young leaves of the aspen shivered in the breeze, apple-green against the olive of the spruce, they rode the strong water.

Good river-men though they were, the next few days taxed the skill and strength of the crew. Chutes and white-water and flumes followed each other endlessly. Then the country ahead began to fall away, the valley narrowed, and a muffled roar reached their ears from below, where the river entered a long, rocky gorge. For three days they slaved with the canoe and outfit over rocks and boulders. Below the cañon the canoe was again put in and shortly the river widened into a lake where they camped for a day's rest.

There is no spring on the high Ungava plateau; winter dies hard with occasional snow flurries in June and frosty nights, then summer, the magician touches the land of the tundra overnight with its wand. Myriad flowers spring to life. The rolling barrens between the innumerable lakes and rivers become gray-green carpets of caribou moss, velvet to the feet, splashed with the white blooms of the

bake-apple and service berries, and the pale rose of the fragrant twin-flower.

In the morning the Peterboro continued down the lake. They were about to turn inshore to boil the kettle for a midday meal when the bow man trailed his paddle in one hand to look fixedly toward a point of boulders thrusting out into the lake ahead.

"What d'you see, Noel?" asked McCord.

Noel reached back his hand without removing his eyes from the far point. "De glass!" he demanded.

Shipping his paddle, he focused the binoculars.

"Ah-hah! Man on dat point, dere! He got fire dere, al-so. I t'ink he signal to us."

"It may be a Naskapi trick to get us into range of the shore," suggested Alan.

"Dat feller ees *kiskwew,* for sure," said the Montagnais, after an interval. "He raise hees shirt on a stick, now."

"You don't think he's trying to draw us inshore, so they can reach us with their muzzle-loaders? We'll take no chances!" said John McCord, making the water boil behind his heavy paddle.

"Let's paddle over to where an Indian's muzzle-loader can't reach us, John, and have a look at this man," suggested Alan. "I'm beginning to think Noel's right."

So, while Noel watched the point and swept the shores behind it, the canoe moved slowly across and stopped out of range of the shore. When the boat was within calling distance, cupping his hands, Noel shouted in Montagnais: "*Kekway! Kekway!* Why do you build the fire? What do you want? If you have people hidden behind the rocks, we will shoot you when they fire. Our guns have great magic. They shoot straight and far!"

The Indian understood the Montagnais for back came the reply in a shrill voice: "I trade at the big fort Chimo. I am alone and starving. I have no gun!"

"He says he's starving and alone, John!" explained Alan. "He trades at Chimo!"

NOEL was giving the Indian on the beach a careful inspection with the binoculars. Shortly he grunted as he handed them to McCord. "He so weak he not stan' up. He lean on rock, and he ver' poor een de face. —Where is your gun and canoe?" demanded Noel in Montagnais.

From the shore came the answer which Noel interpreted: "He say not to shoot, he run away from de Caribou People. Dey keel all hees familee."

"There's no doubt about that Indian being starved, Alan," said McCord with the glasses at his eyes. "He's thin as a spruce. I can almost see his knees shake. And he knows if he's got an ambush behind him in those rocks, he's a dead man himself, at this range. Let's go in and look him over."

Under cover of three rifles Alan pushed the canoe in to within a hundred feet of the point of boulders. As the canoe approached the Indian, it was evident to those who watched him that he was in a starving condition. He was dressed from head to foot in deerskin, coat, shirt, leggings and moccasins; and he wore his hair in the Naskapi manner, chopped off at the shoulders.

ALAN, understanding most of the conversation, listened closely to Noel's talk with the Naskapi. Then Noel turned to the others.

"He say beeg band of Naskapi ees toward de rising sun, east of here, on de barren. Dey spear deer at cross-ovair."

"What is he doing here alone?" demanded McCord. "Why is he starving when the lake is full of fish?"

"Dis ees not hees countree. He hunt de Quiet Water down de Koksoak. Dees Caribou People keel all hees familee. He run away from dem."

"That explains it, then. He wants to get down-river, does he?"

"Ah-hah."

They took the young Indian in the canoe and crossed to the island where they had left the dogs. There while Noel made some caribou broth and fed him sparingly, the Indian told his story.

His name was Napayo, in Naskapi the "One Who Sees Far." With his father, mother and brother he had left the Quiet Water and journeyed up the Koksoak in search of the deer, for this spring no deer were crossing the Quiet Water where they always passed, and the salmon had not started to run. Living on river fish they reached the Nipiw, the River of Death, long ago agreed on between the Fort Chimo Naskapi and the Caribou People of the upper Koksoak as the frontier, the dead-line, between their hunting-grounds, beyond which there should be no passing. But Napayo's family so feared that they would miss the deer migration and later starve, that they took the chance of traveling into the forbidden country. A week before, on the Koksoak, below this long lake, they were surprised by the Caribou People. He alone survived, and was taken into the barrens where they were to burn him at the stake. A night later he escaped and reached the lake, but having no line or net, was starving.

"You passed the River of Skulls on the way up the Koksoak?" asked Alan, abruptly in Montagnais.

Into the pinched features of the Naskapi crept a look of awe. The eyes, brilliant from fasting, were filled with dread as he said: "It is the Forbidden Water. We pass the mouth on the Big River, but no one journeys to the Gorge of the Spirits."

"How far from this lake is the mouth?"

Napayo held up three, then four fingers as he said: "Not far; three—four sleeps. There is much white water and falls between."

Alan and John exchanged triumphant looks. They were within a few days of their goal!

"We do not go to Fort Chimo," explained Alan to the Indian boy whose hand holding a cup of broth visibly trembled. "We stop four sleeps down the river. We will take you with us."

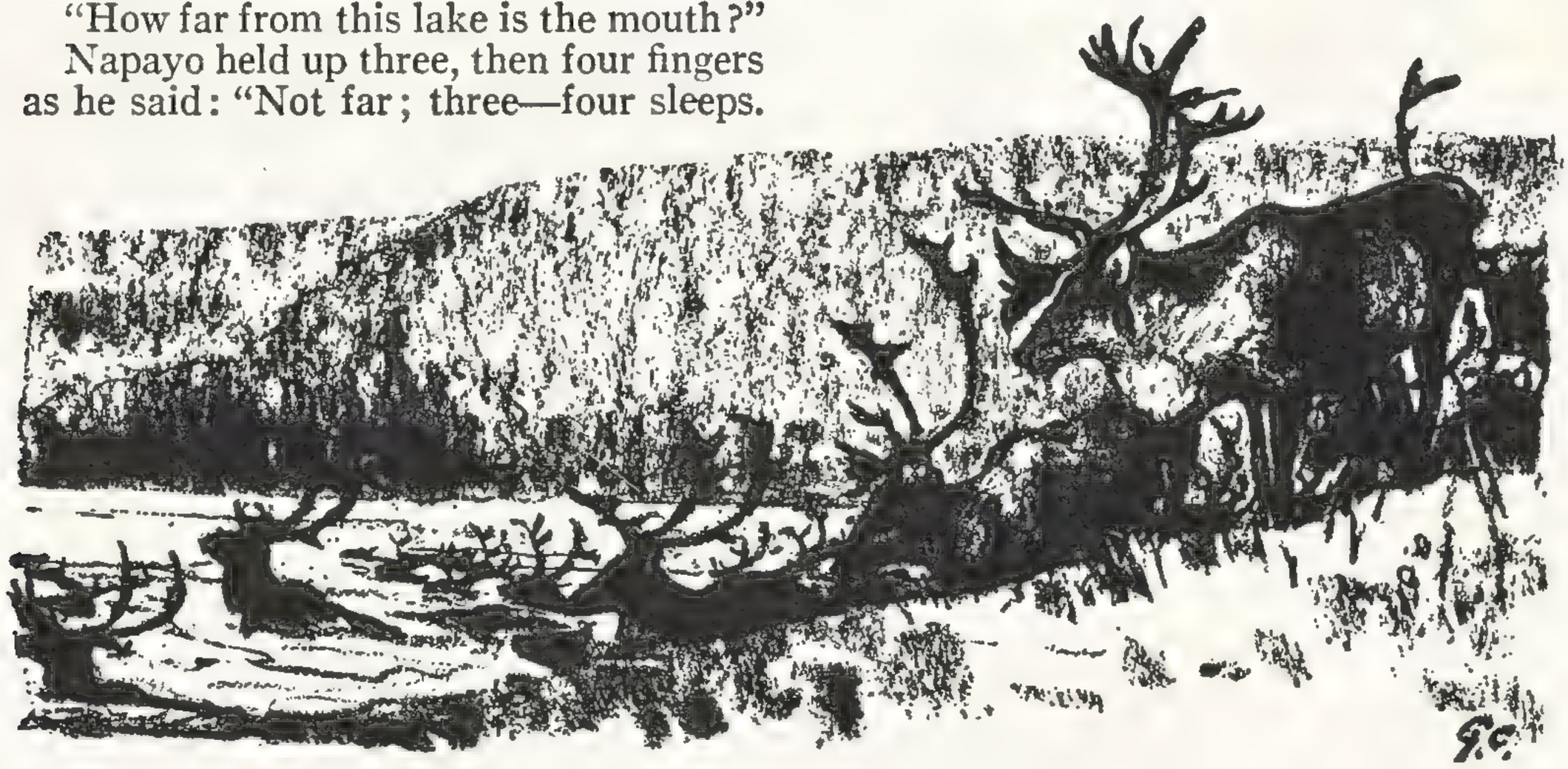
Evidently, from the grayness of his swart features, Napayo was greatly disturbed, but he did not reply.

THE news that a large band of Naskapi were not far east of the lake hunting the deer at a water-crossing, drove them on down the lake and far into the twilight. There was nothing else to do but take Napayo along in the canoe, crowded though it was with people and supplies. And later he would be more than useful as a hunter when the deer headed south on their fall migration.

In the morning the Peterboro left the lake and entered the river. Down past towering cliffs where the river gradually dropped off the higher plateau over black shale and limestone ledges to the lower country, they traveled. Outcrops of iron ore rusting the rocks at the water's edge brought joy to the heart of John McCord.

"Today," he told Alan, "we've been passing millions of tons of iron, but what I want to see is the granite and limestone, streaked with quartz veins, that Aleck Drummond found on the River of Skulls."

Passing the mouths of large rivers flowing from the east, the canoe again entered a lake filled with islands rimmed with boulders strewn along sand and pebble beaches. Tired out, they camped



in the late afternoon of the second day. Kneeling beside his small clothes-bag on the sand beach, Alan got out his steel mirror, soap and razor, for he shaved and took a plunge into the cold water of the Koksoak whenever opportunity offered. In the clothes-bag with his few personal belongings was a small parcel wrapped in deer parchment to protect it from moisture. Taking it from the bag, Alan unwound the skin envelope. Inside was the photograph of a girl with a wealth of dark hair—Berthe Dessane. Suddenly he was aware of the fact that some one was behind him. He heard a low sound, and turned. Heather was walking blindly away from him toward her tent. . . .

"That girl's picture that you carry," Heather said suddenly to Alan that evening. "She—she's the one at Fort George Noel told me about?"

"Yes."

"But Noel says there's a man there—she didn't treat you well after you went north to get the dogs. That was because of us."

"Noel shouldn't talk about it."

"But I asked him, and he's my friend. It was because you met Father and me and denied it, and instead of staying at Fort George went north for the dogs, that she let you go away, unhappy. Perhaps, when you come back to Fort George with gold—perhaps she will change."

"She is not like that, Heather."

Next day the valley steadily widened. The hills to the west of the Koksoak entirely flattened out, and in the afternoon they reached their goal—the mouth of the River of Skulls. The western slope of its valley rose in a succession of spruce-clad terraces to merge with the white moss tundra beyond. It was unmistakable. Eyes moist with the emotion that swept him, McCord gazed up the valley of the branch. Here was the picture that Aleck Drummond had indelibly etched in his memory. The thousand-mile traverse of forests, lakes and roaring rivers was behind him.

"There she is!" he cried, his voice husky with feeling. "Just as Aleck described it a thousand times. Heather, you'll soon be picking gold nuggets right out of the sand!"

Heather smiled bravely back, but her eyes were haunted by fear. Although the men had refused to talk, she knew as well as they, what had often driven them down-river through the night: the footprints or other sign of the savage Naskapi close on the trail. All through the summer and fall would hang the menace of sudden death to the gold-hunters. And later, somewhere on the long trail back over the river ice and snow, McQueen and his halfbreeds would be waiting.

"Somet'ing een de eddee ovair dere," said the Indian. "We have a look."

The canoe approached the drifting object. "A broken paddle! White man's, too!" cried Alan.

"Ah-hah! McQueen lost dat paddle," commented Noel, lifting the broken blade from the water. "By gar, she ees split by a bullet!" he went on excitedly. "Look!"

He passed the shattered paddle back to McCord.

"True as you're born!" grunted the giant. "They've been shot at by the Naskapi, above here! That was made by the ball from a muzzle-loader."

"Maple paddle; that's McQueen's," agreed Alan. "He had two he brought with him to Fort George. I'll bet the Naskapi ambushed McQueen at the long rapids of the gorge, John."

The giant laughed. "That would save us a heap of trouble if they had. I didn't figure he was so close on our heels."

Late next afternoon as the four men were poling around a bend, Napayo suddenly held his pole suspended in air, his head thrust forward, listening. The slight breeze blowing downstream brought to the ears of the crew the faint monotone of broken waters. The uneasy Naskapi called to Noel.

"Eet ees de gorge. Napayo say he feel ver' bad," Noel announced.

Alan reached and patted the shaking Indian, who stood in front of him holding his pole, saying in Montagnais: "We will not go to the gorge of the spirits, Napayo. We will camp below. We will not let the spirits harm you."

Before them, for a mile or more, stretched an alluvial flat filled with sand-bars where the river leaving the gorge above suddenly widened to flow slowly through a basin flanked by sandy shores.

"Here it is, Alan!" cried McCord excitedly. "Just as Aleck described it! These sand-bars and gravel-beds have been washed down here for centuries! We're going to find gold here, boy, gold!"

IT was now August: two short months were all the prospectors could count on in which to wash from the sands the gold-dust and nuggets they had come so far and toiled so hard to reach.

Having lived largely on fish coming down the Koksoak, they were now ravenous for red meat. Therefore Noel and Napayo were to start at once on a hunt into the barrens. For Alan and John there was much to be done, spruce to be cut and split into slabs for sluice-boxes; sea trout netted, and salmon speared and smoked when the run from the salt water began; and when the hunters had sufficient skins of the piebald fawn caribou, there were winter parkas, shirts and leggings, smoke-tanned moccasins and mittens to be made, for the men were all in rags from the hard portages of the Koksoak. Then, because they had rightly anticipated an absence of large birch on the big river, the three birch slabs they had carried all the way down on the floor of the Peterboro must be thinned, steamed at one end for the curved bow, and lashed to crosspieces, to make the long toboggan which was to carry the hundreds of pounds of food for themselves and the dogs, together with the gold, if they hoped ever again to reach the cache at the head of the river.

Industrious prospecting of some of the bars in the river by John and Alan with the miner's pan and the help of the shovel, fitted with a long birch handle, proved the truth of Aleck Drummond's story.

"Look at that color!" shouted McGord one morning when, standing with breeches rolled above his knees beside a hole they had dug on a gravel bar, he had rotated a panful of river sand and gravel. "Boy, we're rich! Look at the coarse gold!"

For three days the two men worked from daylight to deep twilight with the pan, while Heather did the cooking and then joined them to stand, breeches rolled above her knees, in the cold water, rotating a frying-pan filled with gravel and sand to add her share to the increasing weight of dust, coarse gold and small nuggets in one of the small caribou-hide bags they had made for the purpose.

Then Noel and Napayo returned, carrying long faces. They had traveled far back on the barrens to the west, and had not seen a deer.

"We can't go on this way and trust to luck," said Alan, "gold or no gold. We've got to get fish or caribou shortly or starve. I suggest that Napayo, Noel and I pack the canoe past the gorge and travel up the river, then cut into the tundra. If we strike deer, we can load the boat down with meat and skins and run downstream."

McCord finally consented; and next morning Alan and Noel took the canoe on their shoulders and carried it past the gorge while Napayo, to avoid the wrath of the spirits, made a wide circle and met them above. Before he started Heather drew Alan to one side.

"Father is mad about the gold he's getting. He refuses to think of the food supply, but I do. I know you're worried, Alan," she said.

"It is serious, Heather. The migration may pass fifty miles beyond us. Then everything will depend on the salmon. Don't touch the emergency flour and other stuff. We've got to save it for the trip home."

"I won't. Take care of yourself, Alan. Good luck!"

With the dogs running the shore, the canoe made good time upstream; they camped far above the gorge, and in the morning went back on the tundra. The white moss hills were etched and lined with the old paths of caribou, but though they traveled all day they saw no deer. With the dogs on leashes, they searched the tundra, but no game except the ever-present ptarmigan, an occasional loping hare, or a curious fox, met the sweep of Alan's binoculars.

ON up the river went the canoe for three days while Napayo kept abreast of them on the high shore watching for game. At the third camp, when again the search of the barrens for deer had been fruitless, Alan began to have misgivings about the man and the girl he had left at the camp below the gorge. Suppose the Naskapi had followed the Peterboro down the Koksoak from the rapids?

On the next day they made a last hunt into the barrens. And there came the first break in their luck. Two barren-ground bear, fat from their summer's

feeding, made a substantial addition to their foods supply. While the dogs had their first full meal in days, the men cut up the bear meat and back-fat, and lashing their tump-lines to the heavy loads, packed them down to the river. Their caribou-hunt was a failure, but they now had food to tide them over until the salmon run, without touching their emergency rations.

THAT night in their camp down the river Napayo talked of the life of his people, the northern Naskapi, and their eternal battle with starvation. Alan asked him what he thought they had better do if the deer did not soon appear.

The Naskapi shook his head. "They may be moving now far in the land where the sun sleeps." He pointed into the west. "But if they cross the Big River as many as the stars, and go into the country of the rising sun, only Gitchi Manitou will know. You cannot follow and find them. They must come to you. If they do not come, you will freeze and starve. . . . Look! The spirits of the dead are making bad medicine because we came to the gorge. Look! It is written in the sky!"

With shaking finger Napayo pointed to the streamers of the Northern Lights. "See," he said, in awe-struck voice, "when the spirits dance like that, there is always starvation for the Naskapi."

Over a plate heaped with bear steak, the meat-hungry McCord listened to the story of the failure of the caribou-hunt, the shooting of the bear, and of a grand fight the dogs had won against a gang of wolves, while Heather's eyes seldom left Alan's lean brown face as he talked. Then, when supper was over, McCord went to his tent and returned with a deer-skin bag. Spreading a blanket on the ground, he emptied the contents of the bag upon it. Alan stared in amazement at the heap of dull yellow pellets.

"How much is that pile worth, John?" asked the astonished Alan.

"Oh, about five thousand dollars. Glad you came, boy? It's just a matter of how much weight we can take back on the sled. We're rich, Alan! Rich!"

Alan lifted the bag into which McCord had replaced the nuggets, then with half-shut eyes made a mental calculation.

"When we've loaded the sled with enough grub for ourselves and the dogs to reach the headwaters, there'll be a limit to what we can carry of this."

McCord's blue eyes widened. "We'll carry every pound of gold we've got, lad!" he cried. "Are you crazy?"

To their surprise, when they went to the gill-nets in the morning, in addition to the small river trout, there were big, silver-sided sea trout, and in places holes marked the spots where large fish had torn their way through the twine meshes.

"The salmon are here!" shouted Alan to McCord.

While John and Alan, assisted by Heather, worked a gravel-bar with sluice and shovels, the two Indians speared sea-salmon in the rapids downstream. That night the moss-smoke fires burned beneath the fish racks. When the first run passed, Napayo was sent across the barrens to the Koksoak to learn if possible the whereabouts of McQueen's party and to look for signs of Naskapi.

Days later a lone figure bent double under his back-load signaled from the opposite shore. It was Napayo, with the skins of three deer and what meat he could carry across country.

"I went as far as the gorge of the fight," he told them. "There were no signs of the white men on the river. But I saw smoke-signals on the hills far away south. I shot these deer this morning near here."

"Is it the migration? Has it started south?" demanded Alan.

The Indian sorrowfully shook his dark head. "Nowhere on the Big River did I see deer. There were all I saw, these and two that got away."

BY the last of August the deerskin bags had grown heavy with flake gold, dust and nuggets, but the caribou did not come. In sinking their pits down to hard-pan to sluice the substrata where most of the gold lay, they often unearthed human skulls and scattered bones, buried by the years of accretion of sand and gravel.

The River of Skulls was indeed no misnomer.

The second and third run of salmon filled the fish caches, but the men were in rags; and Heather laughed at the patches on her tattered whipcords. Then one crisp twilight as Alan stood with his dog watching a flock of snowy geese cross the rose-flushed sky, the swart features of Napayo exhibited a sudden interest in the water-line. He left Alan and Noel,

and followed the water upstream, dipping his fingers repeatedly as if picking something from the surface. Presently he returned on the run and thrust his fingers, holding some long white hairs, before Alan's surprised eyes.

"The deer!" cried the excited Indian. "The deer are crossing above here! The migration is coming! We must start under the stars—when the moon is up! *Attikwok! Attikwok!* The deer! The deer! They have come at last!"

Alan hurried up to the camp.

"We win!" he shouted, as he ran to join the three figures at the fire. "We're going to get out, John! We'll get the skins and meat and make the headwaters."

THAT night the tired polers made camp in the twilight but there were no signs of the two Indians hunting ahead of them. At sunrise Heather and Alan went back from the river to sweep the barrens with the glasses.

Rolling away before them were the white moss hills studded with boulders. Alan handed the binoculars to Heather, who focused them on the distant tundra while he held her rifle. Tall and strong and straight she stood in her tattered clothes as she swept the tundra.

"I see no deer," she said.

"If you knew how you looked, standing there—" he began, but she interrupted as she turned and handed him the glasses.

"Why do you say this to me, when you carry *her* picture? Oh, don't think I'm not sorry for you—leaving her as you did with your heart sad—"

He reached swiftly and placed his hand over her mouth. "I'm not sad, Heather!" he cried. "I'm glad—glad that I'm here with you! Do you hear that? Do you understand? She's faded—faded entirely. It's you, Heather, only you who count!"

"Why do you still carry her picture?"

"It went into the fire long ago. It's you, Heather, you I've been carrying in my heart!" He impulsively reached as if to take her in his arms, but she stepped away from him.

Then she shivered as if suddenly cold, as she said: "It's only because I'm here with you, Alan. You're lonely—you only think you've forgotten her. If we get out of this terrible country, you'd be sorry if I believed what you say now."

And she started back over the caribou path toward the river.

HOUR after hour the men slaved at the poles pushing the canoe against the hard-running water. Heather was somewhere behind with the dogs when they turned a bend where the river broadened into a long reach of quiet water, and Alan shouted: "Look ahead there! We've struck them, John! We've got our meat and clothes, now."

Above them, splashing the water in all directions, four caribou plunged into the stream and started to cross. Antlered heads, backs, white rumps and tails out of water, the frightened deer drove across the current as if propelled by engines. Seizing his rifle, Alan dropped to a knee, while McCord steadied the boat with his pole, and fired as the deer reached the shallows. Again, as they left the water in a wild panic, he fired, and two bucks wavered, stumbled, and reaching the beach, fell.

"Meat for supper!" cried McCord. "That's good shooting, boy, from this distance in a canoe, good shooting!"

"We've struck them, now!" answered Alan. "There go two more above! We'd better camp here and wire up the dogs, John. Noel has probably got plenty of deer above here, and the dogs might turn the deer to the west. They'll be coming for days!"

That night Noel and Napayo appeared at the camp. It was only the vanguard of the migration, the Naskapi told them. The big herd had not reached the river. It would be crossing for days, and they could select the fattest for meat, and the best fawns and yearlings for clothing as they passed. He and Noel had already shot, dressed and skinned a number from the scattering bands and placed them in a cache upstream.

Sitting on the top of a boulder-strewn hill next day, the two men and the girl watched the scattered groups of deer heading for the river crossings. Then in the afternoon the van of the great herd appeared. As far as they could see with the glasses, marched the battalions and regiments of the array of the caribou, on their annual journey from the vast highlands west of the Ungava Bay to the sheltered valleys of the south—one of the great zoölogical phenomena of the world.

For hours the absorbed McCord, Alan and Heather watched the marching thousands, like great herds of cattle, all mov-

ing into the breeze. Over them hovered circling ravens, and a golden eagle hung high in the sky. On a hilltop off the flanks of the main herd, Alan's glasses revealed for a space the slinking shapes of a family of white wolves watching for a straggling fawn or yearling.

For days the hunters toiled at the camp on the river preparing the skins and meat to be taken downstream in the canoe, and in the building of a huge cache of heavy stone on the river shore. Days after the head of the migration had crossed the river above the camp, stragglers were still coming by thousands.

LATE in September when light snow blanketed the barrens, Napayo again went on a mission up the Koksoak to look for signs of McQueen or the Naskapi; for fear of an ambush of the dog-team on the river ice later was constantly with them. A week passed, and the Indian did not return. Another week, and each night around the fire in the spruce the faces of the waiting men and girl grew more grave, for the boy had won his way to their hearts.

"If Napayo does not show by tomorrow," said Alan, "Noel and I'll take the dogs straight over the barren to the Koksoak and follow it up a day or two. The snow is beginning to pack. It's all right for the light load we'll carry."

"Yes, and run into what he's probably met—an ambush?" objected McCord. "No, let's hang together. When we start up the Koksoak, we'll travel like an infantry column with flank patrols out on the shores."

"I've felt it all along," burst out Heather. "It's McQueen! He's got poor Napayo! It's this terrible gold in the bags there! You say McQueen is dead and the Indians are not near us, and yet you're going to look for signs of both McQueen and the Indians. Neither of you believe what you say! You're only trying to keep your fears from me!"

In the morning the river answered Heather's question. When Alan and Noel went down to the shore for water to the hole they kept broken in the ice, they saw something adrift in the channel.

They poled the canoe up to the ice edge, turned over the battered body floating face down, and looked into the glazed, staring eyes of Napayo.

"They got him, Noel! They got him!" groaned Alan. "Look at that hole in his head; and here's another in the back. See? He was shot from the rear! No muzzle-loader did that! That was made by a Ross, and that Ross belongs to McQueen!"

"He was good frien' of me," lamented Noel, his swart face distorted with grief. Suddenly he stood up in the canoe and, drawing his knife, raised it above the frozen body in the water. "For dis t'ing, Napayo, McQueen weel pay to me!" he said, and for a space he held the knife-handle against his forehead in the solemn Montagnais oath.

They carried Napayo's body up among the spruces, where they buried it under a pile of small boulders to protect it from the wolverines and the foxes. Kneeling, Heather said a prayer for the soul of the untutored boy who had given them his trust and devotion.

November came; the cold became more intense while the snow grew deeper, except where the wind scoured river ice and barren. Gradually, McCord and Alan became convinced that Napayo had met his death at the hands of Naskapi, who had ambushed the McQueen party and taken their rifles.

There was still a cache of dried caribou meat that Noel and Napayo had left far up the river, and one day Alan and Noel decided to take the dogs and bring back the meat while they made a wide swing into the barrens toward the Koksoak to look for tracks in the snow. Because of the heavy load and the fact that the men intended to travel fast, staying out but one night, Heather and her father were to remain at the camp.

The afternoon before the start John and Noel were back in the scrub with the team drawing firewood. Before Heather's double tent, windbroken with a brush barrier filled in with snow, and heated with the portable folding stove, Alan and the girl stood talking.

"I haven't told you, Alan, that I've had another terrible dream," she said.

"There's nothing in dreams, Heather."

"But this one was so vivid. Poor Napayo came to me to warn us. He talked in his native tongue, and I couldn't understand him. But he pointed to his wounds, and his face—such agony in it. He tried so to make me understand."

A rush of tenderness swept over him and he took her unresisting into his arms.

"You must not think of it, the dream!" he murmured. "Nothing is going to happen to us, Heather! Nothing! I love you! I love you!" He kissed her. With a deep sob she clung to him for a moment, then broke from his arms.

"I love you," he said huskily. "Some day you'll believe me!"

TWO days later the early November dusk hung in the spruce forest of the terraces below the Moaning Gorge when the dog-team pulling the sled load of frozen meat angled down off the tundra, and followed the ice-hard trail through the scrub to the camp. The absence of two days had seemed long to the man who had been companioned by the memory of Heather's circling arms.

As they approached the tents from the rear, the dogs broke into a trot, and Alan called: "Hello there!"

But there was no response. No flicker of light from the supper-fire in front of the men's tent stabbed the murk of the spruce.

"They must have been hunting back on the barren and are late reaching camp," suggested Alan.

As the team neared the tents, Noel's black brows knotted. Suddenly the dogs became disturbed, sniffing the air and whining.

"By gar, somet'ing happen here!" whispered the Indian.

Tortured by fear of what ghastly discovery the dusk-filled camp concealed, Alan approached the tents.

AGAIN he called: "John—Heather! Are you there?"

The sound of stertorous breathing and a muffled moan answered from the dusk-shrouded tents.

"God! Did you hear that? Something's happened! Heather! Heather!" he cried. "Where are you?"

They reached the camp and stood staring around them in the gloom.

"Heather!" cried the agonized Cameron, groping in her tent, to find her personal belongings strewn upon the spruce boughs of the floor. He rushed outside to join Noel, kneeling beside the body of John McCord in the men's tent.

"John! John! What have they done to you?" cried the shocked Cameron. "Light a candle, Noel, quick!"

Noel held the candle while Cameron pushed back McCord's hood. Across the giant's mop of yellow hair ran the blood-caked sear of a grazing bullet; but a large-caliber slug had entered his back.

"Snot in the lungs with a .45! That's McQueen, Noel, not the Naskapi. They have looted the camp—taken the tents! McQueen's got Heather, Noel! They've got Heather!" Alan sobbed.

"Dey got her!" sighed the Indian. "But we get her soon, nevaire fear!"

"He crawled in here to die when they left," said Alan. "How long ago did this happen?"

"Eeet might be las' sleep, but eet look lak dis morning to me."

They cleaned and dressed the wounds in McCord's head and back, and carried him into Heather's tent, where they started a fire in the folding stove. But they knew that John McCord would never again see his daughter. While the life ebbed slowly from the man who had toiled so long only to find a grave on the shore of the River of Skulls, they made their plans for pursuit.

Toward dawn McCord opened his eyes and seemed to recognize Alan.

"Heather, John! Was she hurt?" Alan asked.

The dying man's lips framed the word, "No!"

"It was McQueen, John?"

After a period of labored breathing came the gasped words: *"McQueen—got —Heather!"*

Then a grimace of pain knotted the bearded face. Shortly McCord again opened his lips and essayed to speak.

"Shot me—but—I got—two!" Alan heard faintly. "Heather—she loves—you—Alan! Poor—Heather!"

"I love Heather, John! Do you hear me? I love her!"

For an instant McCord's strength returned. Again his eyes flashed as his fingers closed on Alan's.

"Hunt them! Hunt them!" he hoarsely gasped. "They've got my girl—my girl! Hunt them—gold—Heather—yours!"

"We'll hunt them, John! We'll get her! I promise you we'll get her!"

The glitter slowly faded from the ice-blue eyes. They softened as they met Alan's tortured face and it seemed as if

McCord were trying to smile. He moved his lips and Alan heard a whisper:

"Heather!"

Then, with a gasp, the wounded giant died in Alan's arms.

The bitter dawn streaked the lead-hued east when, numb with shock, Alan left his friend, groped out of the tent prepared to take McQueen's trail. With the light, it became evident, from the newly broken trail in the spruce, and the empty gold-cache, that for some reason McCord had brought the eight bags of gold from the secret cache, and McQueen had found them at the camp. But to the food caches, the snow lay unmarked. There the boys took the team and loaded the sled.

In the scrub they found the dogs howling dismally beside the body of the half-breed, Goyette, shot with the ambushed McCord's automatic. Everywhere the snow was trampled down where the mortally wounded giant had fought for Heather and his gold. Then, back in the spruce, the dogs found a Montagnais shot through the body with a .45.

"Dat ees wan we see on de Talking Rivière! John do good job on heem."

"Shot in the back and weak as he must have been," said Alan proudly, "he fought it out to the last! They must have left him for dead."

"Now we've got three, maybe four men ahead of us, with Heather, Noel. They won't dare to try for Chimo with the gold. They'll head up the Koksoak."

Before they covered the body of John McCord with a cairn of boulders heavy enough to cheat the wolverines, Alan said:

"Your hand, Noel!"

Noel reached across the body of their friend and took Alan's hand. With their left hands they held the hafts of their knives against their foreheads in consummation of the ancient oath of the Montagnais, as followed by Noel, Alan solemnly recited:

"We, Alan Cameron and Noel Leloup, blood brothers, swear that we will follow McQueen until we meet him face to face and make him pay. Sleep well, John McCord and Napayo! Your friends will not forget!"

They placed the body of John McCord beside that of Napayo and covered it with the stones, for the ground was frozen too hard to admit of digging. The personal belongings that Heather had been forced to leave behind, together with her tent, they added to the sled already loaded with food and outfit, lashed down the skin wrapping and started the impatient Ungavas on their four-hundred-mile-race up the frozen Koksoak.

At the fork McQueen's trail swung up the Koksoak, as they anticipated it would, and not toward Chimo. He was making for the East Coast; but well Alan realized that McQueen, if he got away, would carry to the coast with his stolen gold no witness to the murder of John McCord. Somewhere on the trail, later on, they would desert her—leave her young body to the foxes and wolverines.

IN the morning, starting in the freezing November air, under the stars, they pushed on up the desolate valley to make camp in the dusk of a wind-break of spruce. When fed, the tired dogs at once dug sleep-holes in the snow, and curling up, noses in tails, defied the frost with their thick double coats.

At the gorge of the Naskapi ambush, while it was still light, they reached Mcqueen's first camp, in the thick scrub of the river bottom below the rapids.

"By gar, he drive dose dog all day and all night," said Noel, examining the snow about the camp ground.

"They must have jumped our camp before daylight, then traveled fifty or sixty miles before they slept. They must be that much ahead of us now," groaned Alan.

"Sleep-hole of seex dog, here," announced Noel. "Dey keel dose dog for sure!"

"Yes, but we're two days behind them, Noel! It's going to be days and days before we begin to gain on them with this load. I wish—"

"Ah-hah! Wat dis?" Noel held a scrap of inner bark which had been stripped from a dwarf birch. "Somet'ing on dis, Alan!" cried the Indian, handing the sheet of bark to his friend.

"Where'd you find it?"

"In dis spruce, here!"

Alan's mittened hand shook as he read the scrawled words burned with a charred stick on the bark. *"Safe!"* he read huskily. *"I—love—you! H."*

"Noel! Noel!" cried the half-frantic Cameron. "She left this for us! She left this message! She's safe—safe, but she's waiting for us, and we're just crawling with this load! Let's gamble, Noel! Take three hundred pounds and race the dogs! We'll get them then—get them in a few days! I can't stand it, thinking of her watching the back trail, watching day after day!"

The Indian seized his friend by the shoulders. "You are *kiskwew!*" he said, sternly. "You know bettair! Wid t'ree hunder', dat mean wid our odder stuff, less dan ten day grub, and we starve on de head-water. For we weel run into beeg snow, mabbe drifter—mabbe two. Dat might hold us up t'ree-four day. You weesh Heather starve wid us, w'en we get her?"

Alan knew that Noel was right, but his anxiety to reach Heather lashed him like a whip, tortured him as the somber spruce of the river shores moved slowly past.

On went the dog-team up the frozen Koksoak. Husbanding the strength of his beloved huskies, buttressing their vitality with big meals, but as the sled slowly lightened, traveling faster with longer hours, Alan held to the tracks on the river ice and over the shores around open rapids and gorges, as a fox hangs to a rabbit-trail. They passed the mouth of the River of Death, and pressed on to the long lake where they had picked up Napayo.

As they approached the narrows, at the end of the second long day on the lake ice, following the tracks that did not swing in to the shore but still kept on until they faded into the distance, the disheartened Alan turned to his friend.

"It's no use, Noel! They're more than two days ahead, tonight! They've gained on us coming up the lake. I thought we'd pick up on them, with our dogs traveling the way they have, but they've gained!"

"Dey have whip de dog hard on dis lak'," consoled Noel, "but aftair dis, eet ees uphill, uphill ovair de shore—*rapide* aftair *rapide*. Dat ees w'ere our strong dog run dem down. Tired dog weel not pull uphill."

Through the early sunset that tinted white lake surface and the snow of the bleak hills to red, and into the bitter dusk, the tired team pushed on. At last, in the river, above, they made camp. It grew colder, and through the night lake and river ice split with a dull booming, like muffled gunfire, while the spruce snapped as it contracted under the increasing frost.

STARTING in the withering cold of the dusk before dawn, they reached McQueen's camp of two nights before. Searching the brush and snow, Alan and Noel looked everywhere for a message from Heather but found only her small moccasin prints in the snow. Later in the morning, Alan, who was ahead of the team watching for treacherous ice over quick-water, suddenly stopped, gazing intently upstream. The dogs moved up to him and lay down.

"Hand me the glasses," he called back to Noel.

"Something dark—on the trail ahead," he faltered. "Wolverines at something dark—on the trail—"

Handing the glasses to his friend, Alan went to the sled for his rifle. "*Marche,* Rough!" he called in a strained voice, and pressed ahead on the run.

As they approached, the long-bodied yellow-brown beasts watched him for a space; then, leaving the dark thing on the trail, set off on a lope for the shore. Raising the sights on his rifle, Alan knelt, took a careful aim and fired. One of the brutes fell, rose and fell again, to lie still, while the men and the excited team approached the shape on the ice.

Freed from the tension that had tightened his nerves, Alan shouted as he saw what it was: "One gone for Mr. McQueen! No more beatings for him! He's out of his misery now!"

On the trail before them lay the torn carcass of one of McQueen's dogs. "Worked to the bone, Noel! He's driving them to the limit!"

But that day the sun set in a leaden sky, and later the warning of the ringed moon flicked the men with fear. In the night they were waked by the roar of the drifter that drove across barrens and river valley burying their camp in the snow. When they rolled out of their drifted sleeping-bags, the fire was out and four white mounds marked the spots where the dogs slept, from which they burst, when called, in showers of snow, as a salmon leaps from water.

"Today we gain on you, McQueen!" cried Alan, starting his dogs. "Today you won't travel with your tired dogs, but old Rough and the pups'll show you what bone and beef'll do through the drifts! *Marche,* boys!"

Steadily, hour after hour, with the white slant of the norther on their backs, the snow-sheathed Ungavas plodded up the river ice. In places the boys broke trail ahead of the team through drifts heaped shoulder high by the wind, but most of the river ice was brushed clear of snow as if swept by giant brooms. Lashed to the bow by thongs, Alan and Noel strained and pulled with the willing Ungavas as they fought with their load, until exhaustion forced them to camp.

"You here, Cameron?" McQueen roared.

Through the night the drifter pounded the valley. In the gloom of the bitter dawn two lean-faced, tightly belted men again hitched the dogs and started into the snow smoke. On through the short day Alan mercilessly drove himself and his team, trotting over the good going of the swept river ice, and lifting and hauling at the heavy sled up over the boulder-piled shores where the river was still open or the ice dangerous. Blinded by snow constantly masking their tortured faces, bucking the deep drifts of the portages, panting men and dogs pushed on and on until the black night fell like a tent and drove them to shelter.

At dawn the wind had blown itself out and the snow stopped. Stiff in every muscle from the long strain, Alan dragged himself out of his sleeping-bag.

"How far do you guess we traveled, Noel, in that drifter?" he asked the Indian.

"Eet was all gain. McQueen nevaire move. We travel t'irty-forty mile for sure. How are the dogs?"

"They're pretty stiff, Noel, but we've got to go on!" insisted Alan.

He made the dogs lie on their backs, feet in the air, while he and Noel examined their shaggy bodies, banded with muscles like wire cables, and searched their paws for pad cracks and balled snow between the toes which would cripple them. Then, over the young snow left by the storm the sled pushed on up the river.

Toward noon Noel, who was in the lead, raised his hand, stopping the team, then pointed to the shore ahead. The two men tore their rifles from their cases.

"Fresh trail, made this morning!" said Alan. "But that can't be McQueen; he's a day ahead of us yet if he never moved in the blow. Let's have a look at it!"

They started the team and soon reached the toboggan trail which led down to the river ice. The two men stared in amazement at the bear-paw snowshoe prints in the new snow, then gazed into each other's startled eyes.

"Naskapi!"

"By gar! Dat ees bad—veree bad!"

"If they're headed upriver far, they're going to strike his trail where he started in the young snow after the drifter! They'll follow him and sneak on his camp!" Cameron's frost-burned face grayed.

"Mabbe dey not hold to de *rivière.*"

"They will, and we've got to overhaul them, Noel—travel all night! If the Naskapi get her, my God! It's too horrible! We've got to reach her, Noel, if we kill ourselves and the dogs!"

On went the stiff and footsore Ungavas at their master's urging. But when the early dusk fell, it was evident that the Indians were traveling fast with a light sled. Stopping for an hour to rest the dogs and boil the kettle, Alan pushed on under the freezing moon that hung above the tundra, tortured with the thought of the despairing girl who waited. But the trail of the sled ahead did not swing to the shore to a camping ground, but continued on over the white shell of the river ice.

"They're traveling too fast for us!" Alan admitted at midnight, wiping the frost from his face and the wolf-hair rim of his hood. "They had hours' start this morning and must have five or six dogs and a light sled. Stiff as we are, we must have come forty or fifty miles today."

THE disheartened Noel nodded in agreement. They could never reach the Naskapi in time.

"But we've got to reach them, quick!"

"Dey are long piece from McQueen, yet, w'ere dey camp tonight. We reach deir camp early tomorrow, you see," urged the Montagnais.

So, against his will, but knowing he must rest his dogs, Alan agreed to camp. Starting later, in the murk of the bit-

terest part of the night, the hour before dawn, they reached the camp of the Naskapi, but they had gone. The sleep-holes showed they had six dogs, and the trail in the new snow of the shore proved that their sled was light. But the tough Ungavas with the heavier load had gained.

Later, white foxes on the ice faded to the shore at the approach of the team, and there the bones and hair of two huskies told the grim story.

"McQueen's down to three dogs now! He's licked, Noel! But the Indians know, now, that a dog-team's ahead of them."

McQueen was killing his dogs; but that meant, also, that the trailing Indians would soon overtake him.

NOW the Ungavas were working out of their stiffness. At noon they reached McQueen's blizzard camp; they found his trail in the new snow leading out from the shore. Desperate for word from the girl who could not now be more than thirty or forty miles away, Alan searched the drifted camp-site. The ashes of the fire lay in the large snow-hole bedded with spruce boughs, over which had been spread a tent supported by spruce logs. The marks of moccasins were everywhere in the young snow and after a careful inspection Noel said: "Ah-hah! But look, Alan! Somet'ing undair de snow ovair dere!"

Near the camp in the spruce was a suspicious-looking mound. Cameron suddenly sickened with dread.

"See—what it—is!" he ordered, brokenly. Turning from his friend, he walked slowly to the shore where the team lay resting on the ice. Rough lifted his massive head, and his tail brushed the snow in greeting. Kneeling beside his dog, Alan pressed his frost-blackened face against the skull of the husky.

"Alan! Come 'ere!"

Noel stood waving his arms in manifest excitement. Alan leaped to his feet and ran to the camp.

"Trudeau!" said Noel, standing beside the frozen body he had uncovered. "Shot through de head!"

Alan bent over the grimacing face of the dead man sprayed with powder burns, to study the bullet-hole in the forehead. Then he turned to his friend.

"You don't shoot a man in the forehead with a rifle at close quarters; you shoot him in the body. This was a pistol-bullet, and smaller than a .45. McQueen and Slade carried .45's!"

"She?" Noel stared into the glittering gray eyes of the other.

"Yes," said Alan, "she has had to use her gun!"

Through the day the team put the miles of spruce shores behind, urged on by grim-faced men who ran with them. With his three tired dogs McQueen was coming back, coming back to the Ungavas who were moving faster and faster, led by the iron Rough with his pacing gait that ate up the miles.

At last, when the muzzle of the black lead-dog who had paced and run through the day as if his stamina knew no end, sagged lower and lower, and Powder and Rogue began to falter, Alan called a halt. Exhausted men and dogs lay sprawled.

They had given their all, and it was not enough. Still, there was no camp that night while unspeakable misery menaced the girl who waited for their coming. When dogs and men had rested, Alan tossed a huge bag of frozen salmon into the snow and started again on his hopeless quest. As they traveled, but one thought burned in his brain: "We must reach them tonight! Tomorrow will be too late!"

The sun went out in the southwest, and the spruce of the river shores went black with dusk. The slowly moving team was approaching a bushy point where the river made a sharp turn. Beyond rifle-shot from the point, Noel entered the spruce with his gun to reconnoiter.

Presently Noel appeared at the point and waved the team on. Rounding the bend with the dogs, Alan drove to the spot where Noel stood staring at two stiffened shapes that lay beside an empty sled.

"The Naskapi!" Alan gazed in stunned amazement at the bodies on the ice. "He was expecting us, Noel, and ambushed them instead!" Cameron's mind was freed from a heavy load. From the Naskapi, at least, Heather was now safe.

"BUT now he have more dog!" lamented Noel.

"He's got nine dogs, and the fish and meat the Indians carried. He's laughing at us tonight, Noel! He thinks he'll run away, now with the fresh dogs!"

Noel only groaned.

"All right, we camp here," rasped the white youth whose eyes glittered in his gaunt face.

Eight hours later, with the team rested, two men with sunken eyes in faces bitter

with a grim resolve, started in the gloom with barely enough dog-food to reach the cache at the headwaters. The rest was abandoned.

"Today we'll reach her, Rough!" said Alan, lashing his belt about his lean waist. "Nine dogs they've got, have they? Watch this team, today!"

THE four huskies, lean as timber wolves, started stiffly with the light sled. They had not traveled far through the dusk of the river valley when they passed the frozen effigies of what had been two dogs, driven until they died in harness, and then cut loose. At daylight they reached McQueen's camp of the night before. And there in a bush was a message. It read:

"Trouble over gold. Dogs weak. Come quick! H."

Desperate with the realization that he must reach her at once, if he hoped to save her—reach her before the madmen ahead destroyed each other and her, Alan went to his team.

"We're going to see Heather soon, boys!" he said, dropping his mittens to stroke the massive heads. "It's going to take all we've got left, Rough—you and I. All day and into the night—all we've got left for Heather! Then there'll be no more! *Marche!*"

Far in the southeast the sun lifted on their last long day, for dogs and men were near the end. Cautiously the two men watched the bends in the river, sweeping the snow far in advance with the glasses to look for a sudden angling of the sled tracks to the shore which might mean an ambush. Then in the afternoon, to their astonishment, they found the bodies of three dogs abandoned on the trail.

"Noel, we've got them! We've got them now!" Cameron cried exultantly, hugging the Indian, then the lead-dog. "It's four dogs to four! The Ungavas win!"

"Dey are done!" panted the grinning Indian, whose swart skin sank in hollows beneath his high cheek-bones. "We see dem soon!"

Through the early dusk, like famished wolves close to their kill, marked four dogs, tails down, tongues lolling, following two stiff-legged men, belts pinching gaunt waists, who often stumbled as they walked, only to catch themselves and go on, their numbed legs shifting woodenly back and forth as they led their creeping sled.

The stars lit the river ice. The spruce went indigo black; and still, like six avenging furies, four wolf-lean dogs, and two men with eyes glittering with the light of victory, crawled on up the river trail. They stopped now, every few hundred yards, to save the strength they would soon need. Then, as they turned a bend, Noel cried: "Look! Eet ees ovair! Firelight on de spruce!"

Ahead, in the blackness of the scrub, was the glow of a fire!

It seemed to Alan as if his heart would burst. She was there, there by that fire —Heather! They had reached her at last!

Their plans were quickly made. They moved into the timber, and throwing a salmon to each of the exhausted dogs, made them fast with wire leashes which they could neither chew nor break. While they rested, for the swift shooting that was coming would call for steady nerves, they wound rawhide around the inside length of the bows of their snowshoes to muffle any possible click. Then Alan slung McCord's shoulder holster, with the automatic, to his belt; and taking their rifles, they began to stalk McQueen's camp from the timber in the rear. They counted on his dogs being too dead with fatigue to wake until they reached the fire. Then it would be quick work. Nearing the camp, the two stalkers separated to close in with cocked rifles from different angles.

AT last Alan stood where he had a view of the fire which lit the surrounding trees with its flickering glow.

Near the fire a tarpaulin or shed tent, banked with snow, had been stretched across two saplings to reflect the heat. In the snow-hole, beside the fire, huddled a bulky figure in hooded parka. Beyond, in the trail from the shore, stood the loaded sled. The four dogs, too exhausted to note the silent approach of the stalkers, lay asleep in the snow.

The shed tent faced away from the anxious eyes of the man who sought the girl's familiar parka. He could not see her. Under that snow-banked canvas Heather doubtless slept, dead with fatigue. He moved closer through the dark murk of the spruce and stood directly behind the man hunched at the fire. This was McQueen. But the shed tent, beyond, was in the line of fire. And where was Slade?

A husky somewhere in the snow suddenly waked and snarled, yelped feebly,

then was silent. There was no sound from the other dogs, too dead to stir from their beds. But McQueen got stiffly to his feet and fumbled in his parka as he squinted into the blackness beyond the circle of fire-glow, listening. He swung around and started toward the river shore.

"You here, Cameron?" he roared. "Well, you're too late!" Snatching a black automatic from his parka, he started toward the snow-banked tent. "Come and get her, now!"

BEFORE the man in the murk could fire, a body lunged from the gloom and catapulted into McQueen's back, hurling him headlong into the snow. There was the muffled explosion of the pistol as a knife flashed in the firelight, flashed again and again. Then the dogs broke loose from the spruce beyond the sled.

A girl's voice cried: "Alan! Alan!"

"Where's Slade?" he demanded anxiously, peering into the gloom.

"Dead!" called Noel. And above the body of McQueen, a Montagnais, hollow eyes glittering, stood stiff as a spruce, while he held the haft of his knife to his forehead and repeated:

"Sleep well, John McCord—and Napayo!"

"Heather!" Alan held the girl to his pounding heart.

"You came—at last!" she sobbed hysterically, clinging to him. "It's been so long, Alan—so long!"

Dumb with the wild joy and emotion that choked him, he gripped her in his shaking arms.

"I've loved you every minute—through those awful days," she whispered, "hoping, praying. It was so awful to leave poor Dad—lying there in the snow! They shot him, but he fought them until he died. And I had to leave him there!"

"He was unconscious—not dead," said Alan. "That night he died in my arms. Before he died, he smiled and whispered, 'Heather'!"

"Dear, dear old Dad!" The stricken girl gave herself up to her grief. When the paroxysm of sobbing ceased, she said, wearily: "I'm so tired—so tired! I walked and ran—most all the way—except on the big lake. They let me ride there! And last night they quarreled about—about me. And McQueen shot him, and just left him lying there. . . . I didn't think I could be any more frightened. But I was—when that happened."

"You're going to rest now—for days, dear. We're all going to rest. Now you stay here in your bag and keep warm while I bring up the dogs."

The men placed McQueen down on the river shore beside the body of the partner he had shot. Tomorrow they would build a rock cairn over there. . . . Then Alan brought his weary and stiff dogs up to the camp. The girl moved through the gloom to the Ungavas.

"Roughy! It's Heather!" she cried, dropping her mittens and thrusting her hands at the doubtful lead-dog. "Powder! Shot! Rogue! It's Heather. Don't you know Heather?"

Sniffs, whines, then a mad chorus of yelps greeted her as the dogs recognized their old playmate.

"Oh, you poor darling!" she choked. "You're all bones! And you did it for me! Dear old Roughy!" She kissed the white star on the skull of the lead-dog.

For two days the happy men and girl and the gaunt Ungavas ate and rested in a new camp across the river, for there was plenty of Naskapi dried caribou and fish on McQueen's sled with the eight bags of gold.

With the bribe of frequent feedings of fish Noel had won over the shy Indian dogs, and when the party started leisurely for the cache on the big lake, the Montagnais followed Heather and the gold on Alan's sled with a team of his own.

ONE night when the stars hung low over the valley and the aurora glowed in the north, Heather, Alan and Rough stood on the river ice as the frozen feather of a moon hung above the western tundra. The girl gazed for a space at the flickering lights on the horizon.

"He wanted this, Alan. Dad told me, more than once, he wanted it. He almost worshiped you. He wanted you and me to have this gold together."

"He knew, before he died, that I loved you," said the man. "I told him, and I promised him I'd find you. He smiled. It comforted him."

"Daddy! Daddy!" Her grief swept her. Then she regained her self-control in the refuge of Alan's circling arms.

Noel appeared at the water-hole in the ice with two pails, and smiled as he saw a hooded shape take another hooded shape in its arms, while a great black dog, standing on his hind legs, pawed at the motionless figures, demanding attention from the two people he loved.

THE END

A Hurry Call

By EUSTACE COCKRELL

THE old colored rubber sitting huddled on the bench under a last year's blanket looked at the clock at the end of the field, but he couldn't see it. It was getting a little dark, and his eyes weren't much good. "How much time?" he asked.

The backfield coach sitting beside him said, and his voice grated: "Three minutes."

"They give Angel one beatin' today," the rubber muttered. "They give that boy one goin'-over; but they aint hurt his laigs. A boy like him that's studyin' to be a doctor—he knows how not to get hurt too bad. They aint hurt his laigs, and there's them three big minnits."

The backfield coach was just three years out of school. "I wish I were in there. I wish I were in there," he said. "The dirty lugs! I'd show 'em. I wish I were in there. Just one play!"

OUT on the field, Angel Mosby Clark got up cautiously, trying to keep the pain out of his face, and walked with little steps back to the huddle. That big tackle had finally got him. Those knees had done it. Broken ribs. Two? Maybe more.

He took tiny breaths, shallowly, as he walked back to the huddle. The quarterback looked at the chain. It was third and eight. "How are you, Angel?" he asked.

Angel took a little breath that hurt. "I'm all right," he said.

"We give 'em Ninety-two," the quarterback said. "They've been killin' the Angel. Let's let the Angel run." Angel went into position.

("That's a long way to let me run," he thought. "Sixty yards. . . . I'm a doctor. Got a hurry call down there. Down there sixty yards. I got to take my little bag —little old ball. Hike! I move easy; I move fast. And there's that hole. Right off that tackle. Right through that tackle. That great big man from the South. There's a little red mist, and I got to take that deep breath. That did it! That flaming chariot. I'm pulling that flaming chariot now. The enemy is upon me. The woods are full of 'em. I got to slow down and cut back. Let that fullback go by—and who's that puffin' right behind me? Who's that knockin' at my door? Don't stop me, Officer; I'm a doctor on a hurry call.")

The big backfield coach had hold of the rubber's leg above the knee, and he was squeezing the rubber's leg off. He watched Angel burst through a hole at tackle with a beautiful animal spring as the fake play unfolded, and now Angel was in the secondary, playing cat and mouse.

"You're hurtin' my laig," the rubber said. "But they aint hurt his'n."

"They haven't hurt his heart," the backfield coach said.

("And he goes by," Angel was thinking. "I got to move. I got to move. I got to breathe, and that old mist she is reddin' up, and she's gettin' thicker, but I got to go. I got my little old bag under my arm. I'll take 'em the long way; there's still three or four of 'em. I'll take 'em the long way around. I'll hide in that old red fog. I'll go yonder to the sidelines, and she'll be maybe clearer over there. Down the hypotenuse of the triangle what's got a—some-

"Don't stop me! I'm a doctor on a hurry call."

Illustrated by
E. H. Kuhlhoff

thing. They don't have to run as far as I do, but they can't run as fast as I can. Let a man run what *can* run! I got a great big watermelon under my arm, and I got old Colonel Mark's buckshot whinin', and inchin' up behind me. I got to get down and do some real runnin', because I got to carry that hot wagon on my back. That old flamin' chariot ridin' on my back. It's gettin' thicker, and it's gettin' redder. That old fog. Could I stop and get my shoes off, I'd show 'em some runnin'. Some runnin' that was runnin'! It would be, 'Move over, Mister Rabbit,' did I have these great big heavy shoes off, and I could get out from under that wagon full of fire.")

The line coach watched Angel fake the defensive fullback into a hurried tackle that left Angel dancing on his toes with the fullback prone in front of him. He watched the defensive center dive desperately for his heels a split second too late, as Angel gave one tremendous spring and broke, running swift as the wind, and as effortlessly, toward the sidelines.

The old trainer chuckled. "You can't tackle no ha'nt," he said.

("Yonder comes the safety man—gonna run me outa bounds 'fore I get to the Promised Land," Angel was saying softly to himself. "Man dyin' down there, got to get there with my little bag. Got the little bag right under my arm. . . . Got a great big watermelon under my arm. Got to take 'em both with me. Can't drop no watermelon I done got shot to get. But I can't run round that man. He's gonna take me to the sidelines 'fore I can get through. Dogged old shoes! Can't stop and take 'em off. He's a-hidin' in that old red mist. She's thickin' up, but I can see him. I'll cut back pretty soon. Zigzaggin' to the old Jordan River—Lord, cut me a swath like You done once before, and let me see through this Red Sea. I turn now—turn and spin. Coach say turn and spin. I'm a-turnin' and a-spinnin'. You can't hold me with your fingernails. Hot diggety dog, she's clearin' up. The Lord done cut me a swath. That policeman's whistle! I can't stop now, Mister Law. I'm fallin' down—don't blow your whistle. I can't stop now. You're runnin' wild, Angel child, not now—not now—not now—")

Angel Mosby Clark was on the rubbing-table, and the doctor was taping him up. The old rubber was standing by, handing the doctor strips of tape. "Run clean through the end zone," he said, chuckling. "And if you hadn't fell down, you'd run smack into the wall of the stadium."

"I got mixed up," Angel said. He rolled his head and looked at the doctor. "I'm studying to be a doctor too," he said shyly.

The doctor helped Angel get up, and then watched him move carefully toward his locker.

The backfield coach looked after him, clearing his throat, not able to say anything. Then he turned and barked at the rubber:

"Get over and help him dress. Get over and help your son." Angel looked up and grinned. His teeth, and the wide strip of white tape, both stood out boldly against his black chin.

The Bog of Ballyvourney

A thrill-filled story of old Ireland, by the gifted author of "Caravan Treasure."

By JAMES FRANCIS DWYER

ON warm summer evenings my father told stories of his youth to neighbors who gathered on the green before our farmhouse. Stories with opalescent words. Fine words that were like so many tinsel-covered acrobats that leaped upon each other's shoulders till they built up a pyramid of wonder that brought gasps of astonishment from those who listened. For my father had the gift of speech, and his tongue burnished the commonest word so that it came to the ears like a verbal diamond.

This story of the Bog of Ballyvourney that he told on a quiet evening left me sleepless for long nights after. For the terror of the bog filled my little attic room, and I saw the great stretch of slime and mud heaving and rolling in the black night.

"When I was a boy," began my father, "there was a big bog close to our farmhouse. It was called the Bog of Ballyvourney. It stretched across the country, and no one, not even my father and mother, knew where the end of it was. For it ran out into the wild country that no one visited.

"A terrible thing was this bog. Cold fear came out from it. Neither man nor animal could walk upon it, it being just a quaking shivering mass of mud and slime, with here and there little clumps of brush and weeds that were hardly a whit more solid than the black slush around them. And it groaned and gurgled like a thing in pain.

"If you stood near the wet lip of it you would hear the noises made by the bubbling mud, noises that were like the grunts that would come from the stomach of some enormous monster that wanted food. That's what Paddy Riordan always said about it. 'It's the devil's stomach,' said Paddy. 'The old lad has spread it out here in the middle of Ireland as a trap for bodies and souls.'

"Paddy Riordan hated the bog, and he had a good reason. One of Paddy's goats, a fine upstanding white-bearded goat that carried the name of General Sarsfield, was tempted one day by the greenness of a tuft of grass that was a few feet out from the edge of the bog. A fine tuft of grass that waved at the goat and said, 'Come an' get me if you have the nerve.'

"Paddy Riordan, sitting on the hillside, saw the goat looking at the bit of grass, but knowing the wisdom of Sarsfield, he never thought he would step out on the morass. But it was the goat's reckless day. He might have got suddenly tired of life, or annoyed with the female goat he was living with, or perhaps it was the taunting of the grass-blades that were waving at him. Anyhow, the poor fool stepped out suddenly onto the slime—and as he did so, Paddy Riordan heard the bog laugh.

"That he swore to; over and over he would tell the story: 'When Sarsfield put his foot on it I heard the great hoarse laugh of the bog,' he would say. 'A laugh that made my blood run cold. It came to my ears as I rushed down the bank, thinking to get a grip of the goat's horns before he went under. But the bog had him. He turned his old bearded head at me as he went under, and never have I seen such fear in eyes as I saw in his. For the goat knew that the devil had him by the hind legs, and that it was a trick of the same devil to wave the few blades of nice green grass in front of him.'

Illustrated by Alexander De Leslie

"The general gave the word for a quick advance; the whole army charged at the double, and plunk they went into the bog. Not a man was saved."

"And there were hundreds of stories about the Bog of Ballyvourney—stories that old men and old women told around the peat fires of winter evenings. But the finest of all was a tale about an Irish princess and how she tricked an army of Danes that invaded the country. The Princess knew a leprechaun, and she asked him to do her a favor. The leprechaun agreed, and he went one night to the tent of the general of the foreign army and told him that he was a traitor to the Irish and would guide him to their camp while they were sleeping.

"The general of the Danes believed him, and in the night the leprechaun led the army to the edge of the bog, they not knowing it was a bog because it was so dark.

"'Do you see those lights out there?' said the leprechaun to the general, and he pointed to the will-of-the-wisps and the devil's flares that you could always see on the bog at night.

"'I do,' whispered the general, his blood hot for slaughter.

"'They're the embers of the Irish campfires,' murmured the leprechaun. 'Now give the word and charge them hell for leather an' you'll kill every mother's son of them while they're snoring.'

"The general was so excited that he gave the word for a quick advance. The whole army charged at the double, and plunk they went into the bog. Not a man was saved—not one. But the pity of it was that the Princess had a curse put on her because it was not fair fighting. She couldn't sleep a wink, and after her death it was said that her spirit haunted the bog. Many of the old folk had seen her, far out on the bog, a cloak made out of gold-pieces around her shoulders, her hair flying in the wind. For the curse didn't permit her to put foot on solid ground till some one braved the bog to rescue her. And although there were brave men in Ireland, there wasn't a one that had the heart to step out on the Bog of Ballyvourney to give quiet to the soul of the Princess with the cloak of gold.

"A QUEER thing was that bog, sitting there in its own slime, as you might say, and sending waves of fear across the countryside. In the winter it was cold and terrible-looking, but in the spring and summer it put on a gay air, with bits of red and green grass and banks of moss that looked like carpets laid for the fairies to dance on. But the fear of it was upon the land, no matter what the season. The great fear.

"Now it was on a summer evening that the youth came to our farmhouse. We were sitting outside the kitchen door when he came up the white road and turned in at the gate in the stone wall.

"'God be good to you all,' he said.

"'And to your own self,' said my mother. 'Sit down, for you look tired.'

"'I am very tired,' said the youth. 'I have come a long way.'

"Now we saw at once that the young man was not of the district. He had a cultivated voice, and there was a gallant manner about him as he bowed to my mother before taking his seat.

"FOR a few moments he remained silent, then turning to my father, he spoke. 'Am I close to the Bog of Ballyvourney, sir?' he asked.

"'As close as one should be at night,' answered my father. 'This is the nearest house to the bog. It's about half a mile down the road.'

"'That is fine news,' said the youth. 'I have walked for three weeks seeking it.'

"Now the lot of us sat and stared at him when he made that remark, because of the queer longing for the bog that he put into his words. He spoke as a man might speak who was trying to find a lost brother, or a wanderer going back to the village of his childhood. And his words stayed with us. Like birds they roosted in our brain so that we thought of them again and again in the silence that followed. Curious words were those. 'I have walked for three weeks, seeking it,' he said. Curious words to anyone who knew the ugly face of the Bog of Ballyvourney as we knew it.

"'My name is Felix Haddon,' said the young man, breaking the silence. 'My home is hundreds of miles from here. I did not know of the Bog of Ballyvourney till a month ago.'

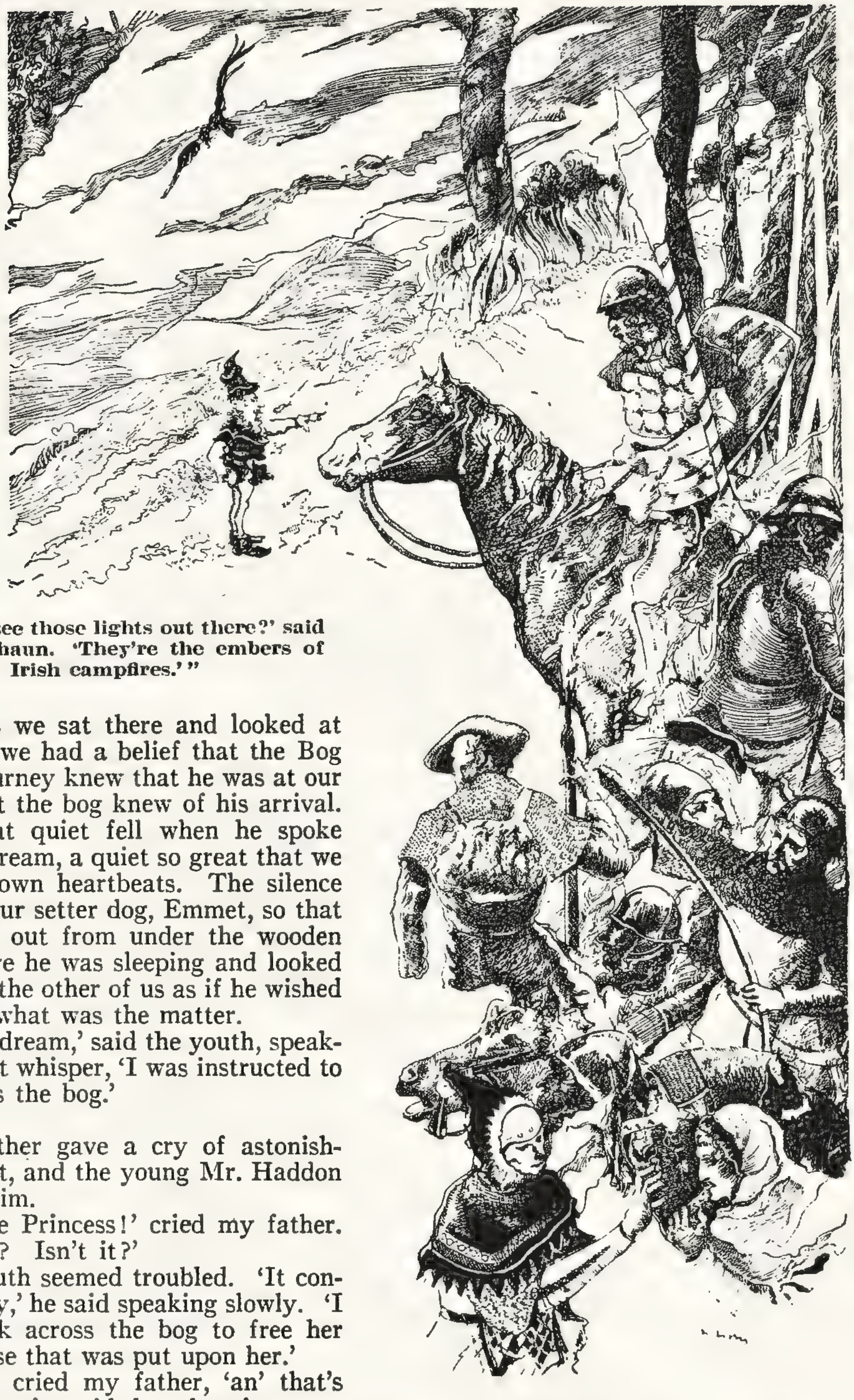
"'I thought all Ireland knew of it,' said my father.

"This Felix Haddon smiled at my father. 'That is because you live near it,' he said. 'It seems an important thing to you, but I can assure you that there are thousands and thousands in Ireland who never heard of it.'

"'And how,' asked my father, 'did you come to hear of it?'

"'Through a dream,' said the youth.

"'That's strange,' murmured my father. 'Queer things are dreams.'



"'Do you see those lights out there?' said the leprechaun. 'They're the embers of Irish campfires.'"

"Now as we sat there and looked at the youth, we had a belief that the Bog of Ballyvourney knew that he was at our house—that the bog knew of his arrival. For a great quiet fell when he spoke about his dream, a quiet so great that we heard our own heartbeats. The silence disturbed our setter dog, Emmet, so that he crawled out from under the wooden bench where he was sleeping and looked at one and the other of us as if he wished to be told what was the matter.

"'In the dream,' said the youth, speaking in a soft whisper, 'I was instructed to walk across the bog.'

"MY father gave a cry of astonishment, and the young Mr. Haddon stared at him.

"'It's the Princess!' cried my father. 'Isn't it so? Isn't it?'

"The youth seemed troubled. 'It concerns a lady,' he said speaking slowly. 'I am to walk across the bog to free her from a curse that was put upon her.'

"'Faith,' cried my father, 'an' that's something easier said than done.'

"'Why?' asked the youth.

"'Because,' said my father, 'there's nothing to hold you up while you're walking. It's like a great mass of jelly it is. Quivering and gurgling and groaning to itself year after year. Paddy Riordan's goat, General Sarsfield, thought that he could get a mouthful of green grass that was only a few feet from the edge, but the bog got the old boy before his beard touched the grass.'

"The young man got to his feet. 'I would like to look at it,' he said. 'I am anxious to see it.'

"My mother sprang up and put her hand on the shoulder of the young fellow.

"Women collogued as they drank a cup of tea. For a strange belief had come over the place. . . . If there is one thing that the Irish have in large quantities, it is belief."

'Not to-night,' she said. 'Tomorrow when the blessed sun has risen over Ireland you can go and look at it. Tonight I am afraid of you seeing it.'

"Every one of us was glad that my mother was trying to stop him, for the very thought of him going down to the bog that night upset us all. And we couldn't tell why. The strange arrival and the talk had tied our nerves into knots.

"'Why not tonight?' he asked, looking at my mother.

"'Because,' stammered my mother, 'the bog is a wicked thing, and the night is not the time to look at wicked things. The good Lord protects us with His sunshine in the daytime, but in the night the devil walks.'

"The young man smiled, bowed to my mother and sat down again. Emmet, the setter, laid his muzzle on my father's knee, and whined softly. A wise dog was Emmet. He would never go within twenty yards of the lip of the bog, and he would always bark loudly to warn anyone who went near it.

"CURIOSITY was upon my father, for the old story of the Princess was in his mind.

"'Did the dream come to you more than once?' he asked.

"'It came seven times to me,' said the youth. 'After the seventh dream I set out to find the bog.'

"'Did the lady herself appear to you?' questioned my father.

"'A lady with a cloak of gold,' answered the youth, then, after a little pause, he added: 'She said that she had chosen me out of all the men in Ireland.'

"My father was speechless when the young man said that. Not a word could he say, and the silence nearly drove the setter mad, he being used to a lot of talk when the family gathered outside on summer evenings.

"It was my mother who spoke first. 'You're tired,' she said to the young man. 'There's a fine bed in the attic, and when the morning comes you can go out and look at the bog.'

"The young man thanked her and followed my brother who led him up to the room.

"But my father sat for a long time after the rest of us had gone to bed, for the coming of the youth had upset him a lot. And in the night the setter bayed at the moon, and some of us thought we heard the Bog of Ballyvourney groaning. It was a strange night.

"This Felix Haddon was up bright and early. My father found him at the gate of the farm staring down the road to where the bog lay. In the first light of the day you could just see the haze above the slime stretches, wispy and thin and white like the hair of an old woman. Not nice at all to us, but pleasing to this Mr. Haddon if you could judge by the look on his face.

"'That is it?' he cried, and his voice trembled.

"'It is,' said my father.

"'Will you thank your wife for her kindness,' said the young man. 'I cannot wait any longer! I cannot! I must go at once to it.'

"But my mother ran out of the house and clutched him by the arm as he swung into the road. 'You must eat before you go!' she pleaded. 'There is tea and white bread and bacon and eggs. Come in and eat.'

"This Felix Haddon was so set on seeing the bog that he didn't wish to eat, and while my mother was begging him to come inside, Jamesy Daley came along and listened to the talk. A great gossip was Jamesy Daley, and he scented something to talk about. 'Wirra, what does the young feller wish to do?' he asked.

"'I wish to walk across the bog,' said the youth proudly.

"Jamesy Daley's mouth opened and stayed open. He gaped at the young man that my mother was now leading into the house; then Jamesy went at a gallop to spread the news. They called Jamesy 'the Kerry telegraph,' and he well deserved the title.

"IT was strange that no one in our house believed for a moment that a man could walk across the bog, yet the look that was on the young man's face as he ate his breakfast made us think that a miracle might happen. There came out from him a belief, a blessed confidence in himself, and that confidence puzzled every one of us. It wasn't pride, for there wasn't a bit of pride in him. He had a faith that must have come from heaven itself.

"When he finished his breakfast and stood up to say good-by to my father and mother, my father said just what we expected him to say. 'We're going with you,' said my father, 'not over the bog —the Lord be between us and harm— but down to the lip of the thing that is always sucking like a hungry cow.'

"Far and wide had Jamesy Daley spread the news about the young Felix Haddon. From cottage to cottage he had rushed with the story, so that when we marched out of our farm we saw lots of folk strolling across the fields, their eyes on the youth who walked beside my father. For our neighbors, like ourselves and like most of the Irish, were afraid to disbelieve any story that was told to them. If there is one thing that the Irish have in large quantities, it is belief. It costs nothing and it gives them a great thrill.

"Our neighbors closed in on us as we neared the bog. Their mouths were open and their eyes were fixed upon the young man. And they whispered one to another as they stared at him. But if they took notice of him not one bit did he take of them. They might have been so many goslings for all he cared. His eyes were upon the bog that was waking up in the sunshine, the white mists rising from it and the gurgles coming out from it so that we heard its stomach-rumblings when we were two hundred yards from the bank.

"NO one spoke as we came up to it. There was a hush upon us all, but Emmet, the red setter, began to bark loudly as if he knew what the young man thought of doing. Always I believed that Emmet understood everything that was said in his hearing.

"But the Bog of Ballyvourney wasn't quiet. It was trying to drown the noise of the dog by making gurgling and googling noises to show the young man how innocent it was. Gurgling and googling, but spiteful-looking in the sunshine. The poisonous bits of red and green on its surface, and a leer in the black slime.

"'There's your bog,' said my father to the young Mr. Haddon. 'We think of it here as the devil's stomach put out to dry, and the good Lord won't give it enough heat to drag the poison out of it. Now what do you think of it?'

"'It's just as I saw it in my dream,' said the young man. 'I saw it seven times as I see it now. It is beautiful, isn't it?'

"'I wouldn't go as far as that with my praise,' said my father. 'It's a wicked old thing to me.'

"Jamesy Daley was hopping around the young man, a little anxious that he wouldn't attempt the walk. Jamesy had collected all the people and he didn't wish

"General Sarsfield was tempted by a tuft of grass."

them to be disappointed. 'You're not so very heavy,' said Jamesy, speaking to the youth. 'You're a light gossoon that might skip over it.'

"This Felix Haddon walked to the edge of the bog, my father making soft warning noises, and Emmet barking like a dog that has gone insane. Why no one stepped out and grabbed the youth I don't know. I think that they were afraid, for he had the manners of a gentleman, and they were but poor people who were not inclined to question the doings of their betters.

"For a full minute the youth stood on the edge of the bog, his head pushed forward, then, with a little cry, he thrust out his arms and stepped boldly on the quivering mass!

"Stepped onto the slime that was like jelly. A cry went up from the group that watched him. A cry of wonder that you could hear a mile away. For he didn't sink in the mud like Paddy Riordan's goat sank. Not an inch of his shoes went under! No, nor half an inch! And he didn't stagger like a man might who had stepped on a mass of jelly. Devil a stagger! Without looking back, and with his hands outstretched, he went forward, and the good people on the bank dropped on their knees, because they thought they were witnessing a miracle, and they were dumb with the wonder of it.

"On and on and on he went. Some of the men got their voices back and yelled out to him to turn, but if he heard them he took no notice at all. The women were weeping now, and old Mrs. Shaughnessy was so upset that she fell in a faint right there on the edge of the bog. Emmet, the red setter, took one look at the youth as he stepped forward, noticed that his feet didn't sink in the mud, then with a wild yelp and his tail between his legs he started for home at full speed. Emmet had seen enough for one day.

"BUT the rest of us were held there by invisible fingers of steel. In a close group we stood and watched the young man, and even the folk who were giving a drink of whisky to old Mrs. Shaughnessy were gaping at the bog so that they nearly choked the poor soul by thrusting the neck of Billy Riley's flask too far down her throat.

"He was fifty yards out now. Seventy-five yards—a hundred! Going slowly, but bravely. The glare of the sun nearly blinded us, but we wouldn't wink to save our lives. Over black patches that looked as if they were waiting to swallow him, over stretches of green moss, over tussocks of red grass that looked like splashes of blood in the sunshine, he went forward.

"We lost the form of him then. He was a moving thing that might have been man or beast. And sometimes, for a minute or longer, he was blotted out altogether by the mist.

"EVERY person on the bank was on the verge of hysterics—men and women. They were crying out to each other, a sob in their voices. 'There he is now!' one would yell. 'See! See! Right out by the black stretch! He's down! No, he isn't, be jabers! It was the flash of the sun on his back that fooled me!'

"'Do you see him now?' another would cry. 'Take a line from the end of me blackthorn! Smaller an' smaller he's gettin'! By the beard of Brian Boru it's a game lad he is! That bog beats Bannagher—an' Bannagher, so they say, beat the devil!'

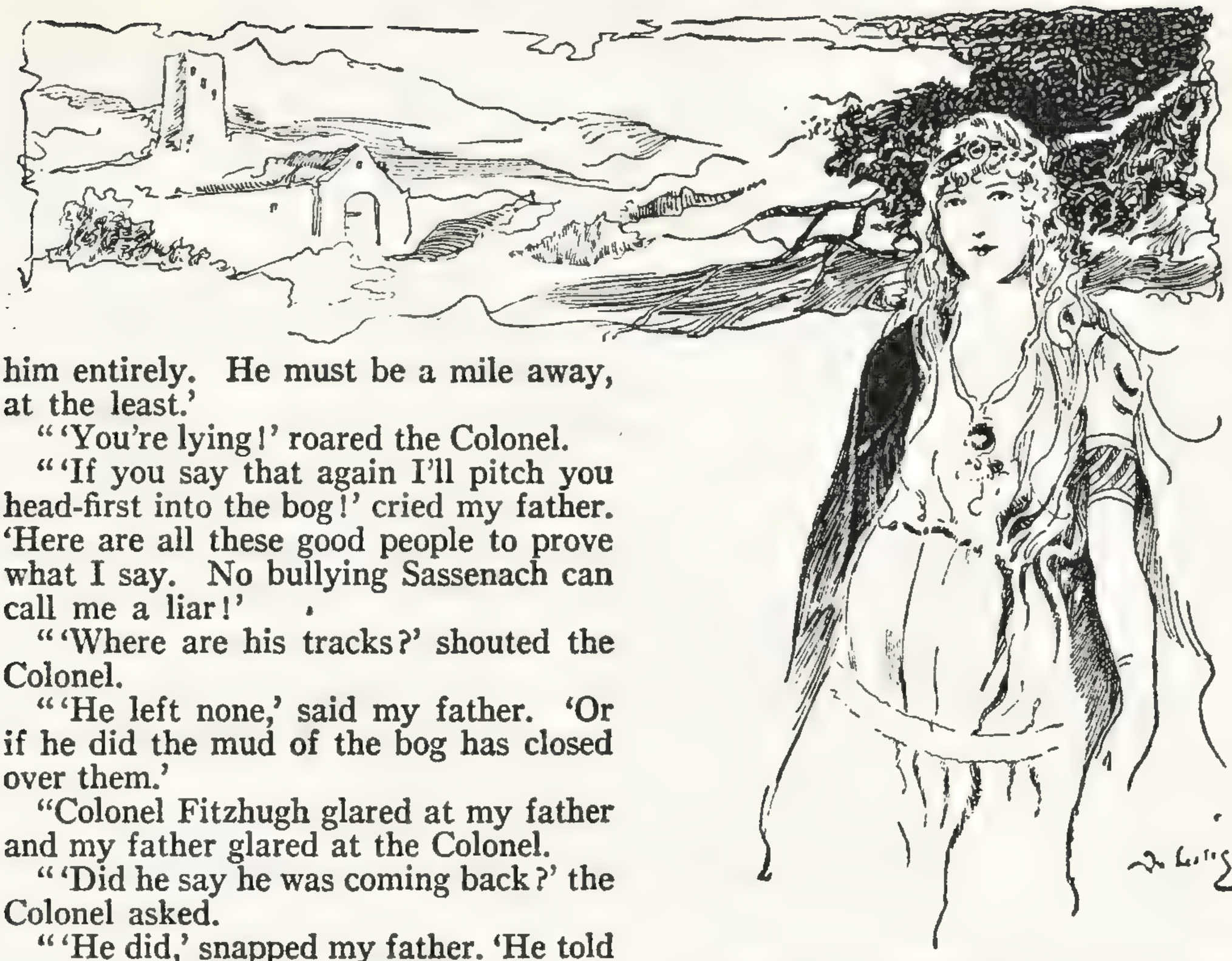
"'Look at the darling!' cried old Mrs. Brady. 'He looks like a black dot in a sea of blood. It's magic, that's what it is. It's a charm he's got for certain. The little shoe of a leprechaun, perchance. My mother said if you had the tiny shoe of a leprechaun in your pocket you could walk on the air.'

"Only the best-sighted of us could see him then. He was a little speck on the far line of the bog. A speck as big as the head of the pin. The crowd on the bank grew silent, their eyes watering with the strain of watching the youth; then, suddenly, a bank of mist came up from the bog and he was gone altogether.

"Three or four women dropped on their knees and began to pray, and the men took off their hats and mumbled softly. And there we were, a frightened group of childish people on the edge of the bog, when the squire, Colonel Fitzhugh, came down the slope, his face red with temper and his big stick swinging as if it wanted to find the shoulders of some one to cool the itch in it.

"'What's this?' roared the Colonel. 'What's all this tomfoolery about?'

"My father started to tell him all about the young man, of his coming to our farmhouse, of his talk about the bog and his dream. 'Here,' said my father, pointing to the edge of the bog, 'is the very spot where he stepped out on the slime, and a minute ago we lost sight of



him entirely. He must be a mile away, at the least.'

"'You're lying!' roared the Colonel.

"'If you say that again I'll pitch you head-first into the bog!' cried my father. 'Here are all these good people to prove what I say. No bullying Sassenach can call me a liar!'

"'Where are his tracks?' shouted the Colonel.

"'He left none,' said my father. 'Or if he did the mud of the bog has closed over them.'

"Colonel Fitzhugh glared at my father and my father glared at the Colonel.

"'Did he say he was coming back?' the Colonel asked.

"'He did,' snapped my father. 'He told me on the way down to the bog that he'd come back in a day or so to this very spot.'

"Colonel Fitzhugh looked at the bog, his face redder than ever, then he swung round on the poor people that were clustered together.

"'The whole damned lot of you have been fooled by a trickster!' he cried. 'I'll wager he's hypnotized you! I've seen it done in India. A fellow throws a rope into the air, climbs up it and disappears. Only he doesn't climb up it at all. He just fools the crack-brained idiots that are looking at him.'

"'THIS is Ireland—not India,' said my father quietly. 'This is a country that has bred saints and where miracles have happened for a thousand years or more. And the good people here saw what I saw, a youth walk over the bog, and they're sober people, not the drunken jackasses of English officers that were fooled by the rope trick.'

"Colonel Fitzhugh looked as though he might explode. 'Get off this land, every damn' one of you!' he roared. 'You're trespassers! To hell out of this! And, listen to me. I'll tie the two big wolfhounds here on the edge of the bog, and I warn you that if they tear you to pieces it'll be your own fault! Now get out, and be quick about it.'

"There was nothing to do but walk away, the land belonging to Colonel Fitzhugh, who owned half the countryside. So the people walked back to their homes, talking in low voices as they went. And my mother and father led us back to the farmhouse, my father nearly as mad with temper as the Colonel.

"'I should have dumped him into the bog,' he said to my mother.

"'And get hanged like every other Irishman that touches an Englishman!' cried my mother. 'It didn't hurt you a bit for him to say that you didn't see the nice young man walk out on the bog. You saw him, and the rest of us saw him, so what an old red-faced Colonel thinks doesn't matter at all.'

"Colonel Fitzhugh was as good as his word. The Colonel's bailiff, a big brute of a man who was hated throughout the country, took the big wolfhounds down to the edge of the bog that very same afternoon, and he tied them there with long chains so that they could grab anyone who came within twenty feet of them. Two huge savage devils they were, with heathen names. Gog and Magog, the Colonel called them, and why he called them that no one knew.

"WE could hear them baying in the evening. It made our blood run cold, we thinking of the young man who

had walked out on the bog and who might foolishly return to the same spot where the big wolfhounds were tied. . . .

"And others besides our family were thinking of Felix Haddon and the two hounds. There were whisperings in the night as men talked with each other over fences, and women collogued as they drank a cup of tea in the kitchens. For a strange belief had come over the place. A belief that fattened and grew with each moment that passed. A belief that rushed across the countryside and built mad pictures in the minds of the people. For twenty miles around the fine simple folk were convinced that the young man, Felix Haddon, would return from the bog with the Princess of the golden cloak upon whom the curse had been put because the trick she played on the Danes was not fair fighting as the Irish understood it. That was what they thought and nothing would shake their belief.

"The night passed and nothing happened. Jamesy Daley was up at dawn and he crept down to the bog to look at the two big wolfhounds. They were there on the edge of the slime, walking up and down and barking whenever the bog gurgled. 'Like a pair of carriage horses are the big devils,' said Jamesy, as he distributed the news. 'They'll eat the young man if comes back in the dark. If I had a rifle I could pick them off when it came dusk.'

"'Leave be,' said my father. 'If the boy had the gift to walk on the bog, he's got the power to make a fool of those two dogs. If you shot one of those beasts they'll give you three years in jail.'

"'It would be worth it,' said Jamesy. 'Think of the pride one would get from the job.'

"The night came down with more clacking of tongues than ever. Billy Riley took a squint at the dogs at dusk, and he said the brutes had their heads turned to the bog, and their hackles were up as if they saw something far out on the slime.

"'He'll come back tonight,' muttered old Mrs. Shaughnessy. 'He will for certain. I have a feeling in my bones.'

"It was near midnight when we heard the hounds. Never such a racket did two dogs make in the history of the world. You could hear them three miles off. It's a fact. They woke Peter Clancy whose farm was over two miles from the bog, and Peter was a little deaf at that.

"In the dark night their howling was terrible to listen to. My father and

mother got up and lit the lamp, and we could see other little lights in the farms that were nearest to ours. Everyone was awake, listening to the great hullabaloo, and praying were some of them, for the noise of the hounds put the fear of God in the hearts of the stoutest.

"For a full half hour the baying continued; then there came to our ears a wild howl of agony from one of the dogs, a terrible cry that ran red through the night and made the backs of our necks prickle.

"'The bog has got one of them,' muttered my father. 'That's a death-cry for certain.'

"FOR a minute there was silence; then we heard the other hound. He was running through the night, running up the road in the direction of our farm, and he was howling as he ran. Howling with the great fear that was snapping at his heels. My father opened the door and held the lamp high. In the beam

"In the beam of light we saw the hound flash by, howling with the great fear that was snapping at his heels."

of light we saw him, the foam flying from his jaws, traveling at the speed of an express train.

"He flashed by our farm and we listened to his howls that came back to us. We could tell that he had left the road and was streaking cross-country, ullaluling as he fled. They found out later that he was Magog, and that was the last that was ever seen of the brave Magog in the country.

"When the dawn came, people ventured down to the edge of the bog. The hind-leg of Gog was sticking up out of the black mud, and the bailiff man and some of the Colonel's servants put a rope around it and pulled him out. Dead as a doornail he was.

"But there were bigger things to wonder about. Near the spot where Gog was found there were the footprints of a man and a woman. Coming straight from the edge of the bog and leading up the soft earth of the bank till they were lost in the heather. And there at the edge of the heather Jamesy Daley found three gold coins with four holes pierced in them, as if they had been sewn together to make a golden cloak!

"Three of them! Fine big coins that no one had ever seen the likes of. The Colonel took them from Jamesy and sent them to a big museum in London, and the men in the museum wrote back that they were thousands of years old. Ten thousand and more, and they thought they had been preserved in the peat. Of course they knew nothing at all. The gold coins, as everyone in the district knew, had fallen from the cloak of the Princess when the young Felix Haddon had brought her out of the bog. We all knew that.

"'The big dog might have snapped at her cloak as they stepped off the bog,' said old Mrs. Shaughnessy. 'Jamesy Daley swears that there was the tooth-mark of a hound on one of the coins.'

"'I saw it as plain as day,' said Jamesy Daley. 'Saw it before the old Colonel snatched them out of my hand. The brute they called Gog must have made a bite at her before the young fellow threw him into the bog.'

"And that's how the story stands. The Princess has never been seen since, and where she and the young man are living is not known to a soul. But wherever they are they must be happy, for the good people near the Bog of Ballyvourney pray for them each night as they kneel by their beds."

TEMPEST OVER

By ACHMED ABDULLAH

The Story So Far:

JIM M'GREGOR was a perfectly sane young American: yet the reasons which led to his finding himself broke in Addis Ababa early in the war, and to his afterward undertaking a desperate mission of international importance—these might well have made you think him crazy. Probably he was something of a nut, at that; for he was a musician, a song-writer from Tinpan Alley, and only moderately successful. For Jim yearned to write really great music—in particular, to finish his masterpiece "The African Symphony." And most musicians, perhaps, have a screw loose somewhere.

Moreover, Jim was in love, and when was an honest lover altogether sane? Kathleen O'Grady, her name was; and her father was Dan O'Grady—the Dan O'Grady who made so much money in mines and such. "Don't blame you," said O'Grady when Jim got his nerve up to speak to old Dan about Kathleen. "But the answer is no." Not because he was poor, O'Grady conceded, but because he was pure gold—too soft. What Jim needed was an alloy of baser metal that would harden him—teach him to fight. . . . And the worst of all this was that Kathleen agreed with her father.

Pacing the streets that night, Jim wandered into Harlem; and suddenly a wild weird tune from a shuttered café woke the musician in him. He made his way inside—and found himself menaced by a gun in a strange gathering of dark men who were not negroes. He explained that he was a musician, that he simply must hear that music again—must have it for his African symphony. A white man named Garatinsky, who seemed the leader of this strange group, spoke sharply: "No! Impossible."

"Well—at least, do you know a place, anywhere, where I can hear that tune?"

"Yes. There is such a place." The Russian laughed disagreeably. "In Addis Ababa."

"Ethiopia!" Jim mused, as he tramped homeward. There was talk of a war there. . . . Dan and Kathleen thought him too soft, that he needed to learn to fight. . . . And there he could get the material to finish his African symphony. Crazy as it was, Jim took ship for Africa.

The journey cost more than he'd expected; and though he got to his goal of Addis Ababa, he soon found himself broke—and thrown out of an Armenian hotel on his ear. He earned a little money singing in a café. That night it was when, wandering in the darkness on the outskirts of the town, he heard that wild weird strain of music that had so fascinated him in Harlem. He made his way via a balcony to the roof of the palm-wood structure whence came the

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AFRICA

Illustrated by
L. R. Gustavson

A young American's terrific adventure in the Dark Continent . . . By the famous author of "The Mating of the Blades," "The Swinging Caravan" and other noted books.

savage music, and peered through a crack. The scene within was even more savage: a company of strange men chanting in the torchlight before a monstrous idol; and one of these men was seized, stripped, and carried to an altar while a native priest raised a sacrificial dagger.

Jim was appalled. Incredible, this—this thing. A human sacrifice—blatant, melodramatic. And it was happening—before his eyes. It was a fact!

Dear God—a fact! *(The story continues in detail:)*

DEEP in the hidden soul of most men is the shadow of the zealot. Deep in the subconsciousness of most Americans, Catholic or Protestant, is a residue of the Puritans; and Jim felt it now.

Felt it as he beheld the dagger in the medicine-man's hand descend slowly; as, through the pall of silence, came the onlookers' labored breathing. Felt it as a sensation of terror, of dread—and hate.

Hate which told him that he must do —something. But what? And how?

He was alone. He was unarmed.

God, how he wished he had never come here—that he were back in New York, walking down Tinpan Alley. . . .

Midnight here. Would be about six o'clock in New York. And the skyscrapers emptying of their daytime army of workers, cramming the subway expresses on their evening migration to Flatbush and the Bronx.

Floodtide now in Flatbush and the Bronx. Ebbtide, Jim thought, in Addis Ababa. Ebbtide of a life, there before the juju idol, sinking to its close. . . . .

The years to come might bring to Jim M'Gregor a fair measure of success and happiness, with his beloved wife, and his children. . . . Yet he never entirely got over the impression of that night, on the roof of the medicine temple, on the outskirts of Addis Ababa.

Not only because of the bestial cruelty of what he was watching, but because of his own impotence; looking on, doing nothing—because of his cowardice, he would say to himself, later on; and he would be mistaken in his judgment.

For what could he have done? Burst in—hit out right and left with bare fists? All that would be accomplished would be two lives sacrificed, instead of one.

Still, if cowardice it was,—at least as he saw it,—he made up for it when, within the space of the next hour, he gave a promise to Simon Frazer the missionary, and in the course of time, kept it to the fullest; when he—the city-bred youth whose natural habitat was Broadway and Seventh Avenue, and whose most violent exercise, in the past, had been a mild game of baseball, or shooting the chutes at Coney Island—set out on his back-

breaking, heart-breaking wilderness trek to attempt a decent and rather quixotic thing—to attempt it without hope of reward or even of success—to toil, regardless of what defeats and great sorrow the present might bring, for the future, the future of an alien land: Africa.

An Africa which he would hate, and love, too. For it was destined to be the endeavor, the trial, the test of his life; the end of his youth, the seal of his manhood.

ALL this was later. Here he was now, peering through the crack in the palm-wood slabs. The scene below had become blurred, indistinct, with incense smoke bloating and twisting, coursing up to the ceiling, clinging there for a second or two, then dropping, discharging bizarre balls and threads of gold and red and purple, of rose-pink and violet and emerald-green. Then a great voice boomed out, apparently coming from the idol itself—a voice with ten times the volume of an ordinary voice, thundering out words in Amharic so that the very walls seemed to vibrate. Silence again for a moment. Then the chanting recommenced: a canticle of all Africa, horribly symbolic with a brooding, intense melancholia which was caused by the augmented intervals between the sixth and seventh notes (even at this moment his composer's brain did not cease from registering and recording), and the seventh note itself curiously flattened; with the scales moving steadily downward, not upward as in Occidental music; without key, without definite tonality, finally slurring out in a wailing pianissimo. And suddenly cutting athwart it, a rattling gurgle: a man dying in agony and fear.

Jim bit his lips. A greasy, sickly taste was on his palate, like a nauseating drug which his throat refused to swallow. He felt faint. He closed his eyes.

When he opened them again, the swinging lamps in the temple had been extinguished. There was darkness, and there was silence—with only the labored breathing of the people to tell him that life was about somewhere.

Then the silence was broken. The darkness was shivered.

For garments rustled, weapons clashed, feet pattered into motion. Torches were lighted, were carried high, blazing scarlet and blue and yellow, as the door opened and the temple emptied of worshipers.

Singly they left, and by twos and threes. Once six came in a group, walking close together, keeping step. They carried a long bundle wrapped in dirty-white linen—a dead man whom they would take up into the Entoto hills and put there in a shallow grave, covered with heavy stones so that the hyenas could not get at him, not far from Debra Lebanos.

Grim, unconscious irony was in that thought. Debra Lebanos, whose monastery for many centuries had been the spiritual core of Christian Ethiopia. Debra Lebanos, where according to the legends, the waters of Jordan, conveyed subterraneously down the Red Sea, bubble forth to bless the land for a hundred square miles. Debra Lebanos, in whose murky sanctuary tonsured and turbaned priests chant the ancient Nestorian liturgy. And somewhere in the sunless, forbidden places, within sound of matins and vespers and *Kyrie Eleison*, the burial of a victim slaughtered at the juju altar, while masked, painted men stepped the intricate maze of the devil-dance, and while the drums droned the rites of a dread faith that had been old in the days of Bethlehem and Gethsemane; that reached back, perhaps, to blood-stained Babylonian Baal.

Feet slithered away in the distance. The torches blended into the glowing, swathing purple of the night, their sparks softening to a running play of rainbow colors, finally dying altogether with just a single high-light still glistening, like the blood-gleam in a black opal.

Jim waited, crouching behind the balustrade of the roof. He decided to count slowly up to a thousand before it would be safe for him to come down.

But he changed his mind.

FOR another man came out of the temple—evidently the last, and in charge of the building, for putting his torch on the ledge that served as hitching-post, he locked the door and gave it a shake to see that it was fastened securely. Then, about to be on his way, he picked up the torch again. It slashed crimson and orange across broad ebony features, across savage jungle finery of tawny lion pelt and copper bands and kinky hair trained into tall, spiral columns. . . .

Brown, thought Jim, Theodore Roosevelt Brown, the Georgia negro!

His immediate reaction was curious. Mentioning the matter, months later, to

friends home in New York, he found it difficult to express precisely how it affected him; to make clear how, of all the hideous, gruesome events of that night, the fact that Brown had taken part in the ritual had seemed the most ghastly; more loathsome and revolting than the ritual itself. After all, he would

"You must carry on! Find that lair of Satan!" Frazer's bony hand clutched the younger man's. "Do you promise, M'Gregor?"

point out, Central African savages will have their brutish superstitions and ceremonies; there were, from Zanzibar west to the Congo, and from Yakoba south to Kazembe, periodical human sacrifices for the purpose of staying some tribal calamity, to bring rain, to propitiate the gods, to celebrate the new moon. He had begun to understand now, though vaguely, how the Russian and the Arab fitted into the picture. But Brown—

"A black American," he said, "as I'm a white. He and I spoke the same language—in a way. Had the same notions—in a way. How do I mean? Well—George Washington, and chewing-gum, and Virginia tobacco, and cheese with your apple pie, and the Sunday comics—and wasn't Ty Cobb one hell of a swell guy, and—oh, you get the idea, don't you? Little things that, when you tot them up, spell the Stars and Stripes. And to see him here, reverted to type—isn't that the high-brow word?—it made me mad: and I guess I behaved like a jackass. I scrambled lickety-split down from that roof—must have been too damned mad to think of the danger; all I wanted was to give that darky hell!"

He ran after Brown. He grabbed him by the shoulder. His words—considering his murderous rage—were singularly weak and ineffectual, an anticlimax:

"You—you lousy skunk!"

"Fo' the sweet Lawd's sake," Brown stammered, "where yo' from, boss?"

"I was up on the roof."

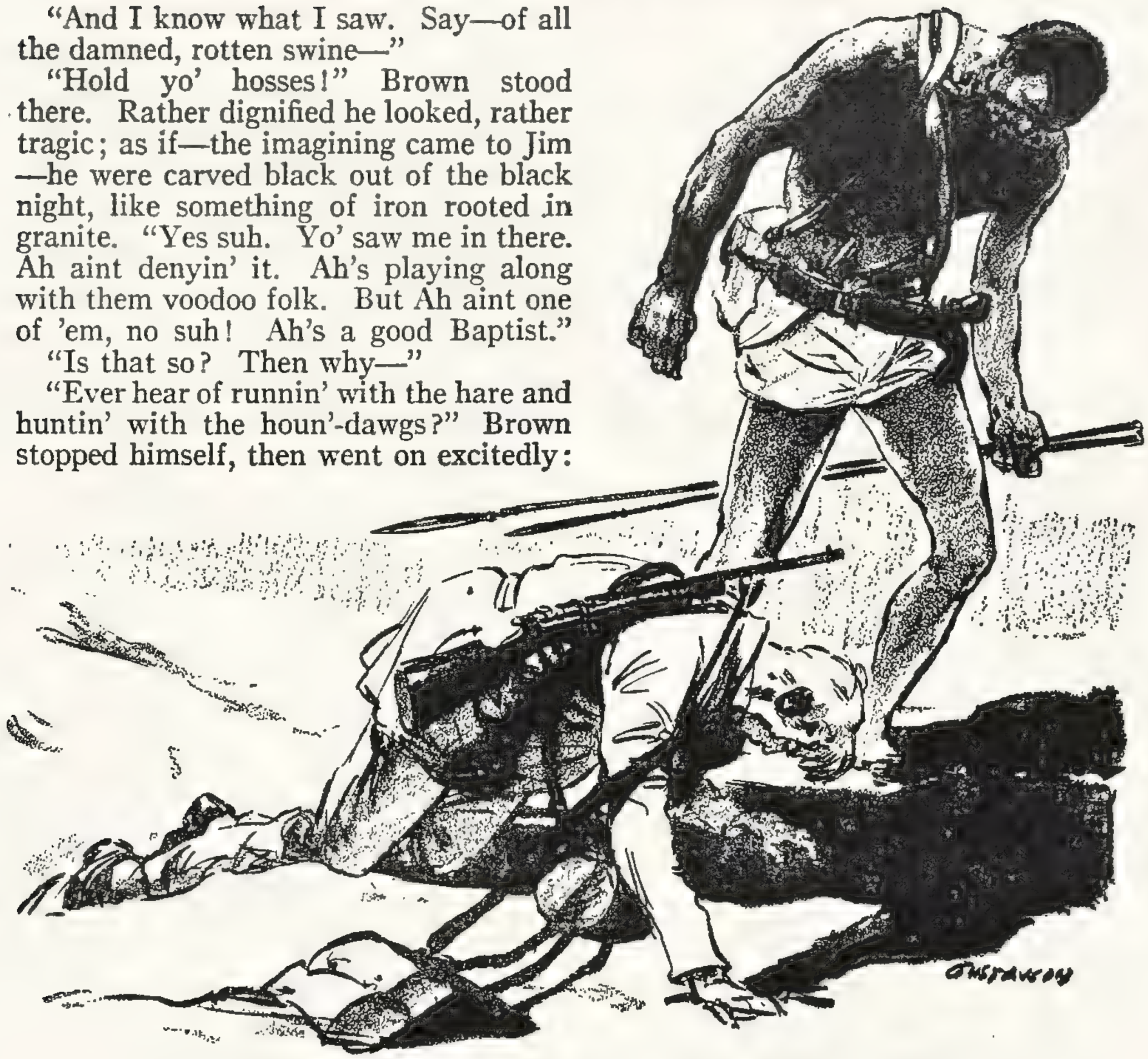
"If them niggers had caught yo', yo'd be in heaven now, pickin' yo'self a lady angel." He shook his head. "Boss," he went on, "yo' sure looks mad. And Ah knows w'at you're thinkin'."

"And I know what I saw. Say—of all the damned, rotten swine—"

"Hold yo' hosses!" Brown stood there. Rather dignified he looked, rather tragic; as if—the imagining came to Jim—he were carved black out of the black night, like something of iron rooted in granite. "Yes suh. Yo' saw me in there. Ah aint denyin' it. Ah's playing along with them voodoo folk. But Ah aint one of 'em, no suh! Ah's a good Baptist."

"Is that so? Then why—"

"Ever hear of runnin' with the hare and huntin' with the houn'-dawgs?" Brown stopped himself, then went on excitedly:



It was like a nightmare; yet he kept on, hour after agonized hour.

"Lawdy-Lawd! Mebbe yo're jis' the man the Reverend Frazer has been prayin' fo'. Come on. We's goin' places."

Again Jim's reactions were curious. For at once, unreasonably, his horror and loathing vanished. The negro—he was convinced—was a decent man; decent, too, the reason—whatever it happened to be—which had made him take part in the heathenish ritual.

"All right," he replied.

"Let's go." Brown dipped the torch into a puddle so that it sizzled out. "Gotta be careful."

He took Jim by the hand, guided him over the rough ground—stopped, presently, at a *chicka* hut, pushed open the door. It was, Brown explained, where he lived when he was in town.

THERE was a single room, one corner cut off by a ragged curtain. With a word of apology, he disappeared behind it. He came back, some minutes later; and at first Jim did not recognize him: he had divested himself of all his jungle finery, including the fantastic headgear; was now dressed, like most Abyssinians, in skin-tight trousers, white flowing *shamma,* bare-headed and bare-footed.

"Gotta be careful," he repeated. "With them crazy togs, Ah's as easy spotted as a pink elephant."

Once more they were on their way. Jim did not inquire whither, nor why. He was beyond asking, almost beyond wondering. Lurid, incredible happenings, these last few hours, had crowded in too fast. His hunger gnawed. He was glad of it. At least hunger was real; it was positive and intelligible.

They walked for quite a while, toward the farther end of Addis Ababa. They crossed Post Office Square.

Night was less opaque. Suddenly, dramatically, as it does in the tropics, without blurred, wiped-over half-lights of dawn, young day was shooting up, racing along the rim of the world in a sea of fire that put out the paling stars. The east flushed with violet and lemon.

Early workers shuffled along, yawning, rubbing their eyes, chewing *khat*.

They reached another *chicka* hut. Brown knocked. A feeble voice invited:

"Come in."

They entered. It was the usual room. Unpapered wattle-and-daub walls; rough-hewn beams tied with ropes and held in place by the weight of the corrugated iron roof. Simple native-made furniture. There was one bit of luxury: a radio on a low book-shelf.

Stretched out on a narrow cot was an old man. A white, gray-bearded man. Once he must have been a giant. Today he was shriveled, sunk into himself, the skin on his cheeks loose and flabby, the eyes red-rimmed.

"Good thing you're back," he said to Brown with a faint, pleasant Scotch burr. "I won't last out the hour."

WITH clumsy tenderness the negro caressed the other's forehead.

"Don't yo' give me no such foolishment, Reverend!" he admonished.

"I know what I'm talking about." He smiled thinly. "Our friends are experts at poisoning."

"But the doctor—"

"Was here. And I made him tell me the truth. No hope. He allowed me till morning—at the most. He had to leave to look after other patients." He sighed. "What can a man accomplish in forty minutes?"

"Reverend, there's nothin' I wouldn't do—"

"Do for me—and for the cause? You've done it. Done wonders. And the Lord will reward you. But you—oh, you are but one; you're alone. And the enemy—so many of them—powerful—unscrupulous."

"Listen, Reverend—"

Brown whispered rapidly. The other looked up, toward the threshold. He saw Jim—had not noticed him before. He said:

"Won't you come nearer?"

The younger man stepped up to the cot. The missionary stared at him for long, dragging seconds, as if he were trying to search Jim's very soul.

He went on: "We're strangers, you and I. I know. But I'm dying. I have not time to—oh—to break the social ice gradually and delicately. So you will not mind blunt, direct, personal questions?"

"Not a bit. If,"—much embarrassed,—"if I can be of any help to you."

"To *me?* No, no. I'm through. I told you before. But—" A short pause. "What is your name?"

"Jim M'Gregor."

"Good Scots name. So's mine. Simon Frazer. You're an American, I take it?"

"Found out!"

"Are you a believer—a Christian?"

"Yes and no."

"There's no such thing, man."

"You see—my mother was Irish. I was brought up a Catholic. I go to mass occasionally. Still—"

"Say no more. I understand. You're like a lot of young people, of—if you will forgive my outspokenness—young fools. Ashamed of confessing your faith in the Lord God who created you, eh? Tell me—do you believe in being decent, truthful, unselfish?"

"Sure. At least,"—Jim flushed,—"I try."

"Then you're as good a Christian as the next man. What may your business be?"

"I'm a musician."

"And, I suppose, here as a tourist?"

"No such luck. Never had enough money for that sort of thing. I'm here—for reasons." Jim hesitated. "It would take hours to explain."

"I haven't hours left to listen. Can't you put it in a few sentences?"

"I'll do my best."

Jim was silent for a second or two. He was conscious of a deep liking for the missionary. There was in the latter, he thought, an amazing strength, even tonight, as he lay dying; a harsh, stiff, ungracious strength, yes! But splendid and fearless; invulnerable because of his faith in God, and his faith in himself.

A man he was who—who had found his manhood. . . . . Jim gave a start.

Why—he knew now, suddenly, what had really brought him to Africa; and he said:

"I came here to find my manhood, to—"

"I understand. A precious thing, manhood—a Holy Grail. Suppose I told you where you *can* find it?"

"Could you?"

"Yes. You can find it by undertaking an heroic task. Listen to me."

FRAZER spoke at length. There was breathlessness in his words, breathlessness in the very air, thought Jim—the breathlessness of approaching death.

He described an extraordinary conspiracy. He knew, indeed, but a part

of it, one side of it; could only guess at the motives behind it. . . . What he knew was the strange story of the Speaking Idols:

Here and at least a dozen other places in Africa were ancient idols—huge fantastic images worshiped for countless generations by various tribes or cults of heathen natives. And within the last year or so these idols had begun to speak! Here in Ethiopia the mysterious voice boomed out in Amharic; elsewhere the words were Arabic or Coptic or the dialect native to the region. And in each place the great Voice stirred hatred and sedition and crime.

The explanation of course was superficially simple: Radio! To hoodwink native peoples still ignorant of this recent marvel of science was not difficult. And a receiving-set with its batteries installed within or near the idol easily convinced the idolaters that they heard the words of a god. (Now indeed for the first time Jim realized the source of that tremendous voice he had heard that very night at the scene of sacrifice.)

The basic mechanism behind these Speaking Idols, however, was not quite so simple: A hidden broadcasting station somewhere in north Africa, a station that had either been moved several times or that possessed some secret scientific method of confusing the direction of its signals. For attempts to locate it by trigonometric calculation or other scientific means had brought baffling results.

Still more puzzling was the motive behind this vast Satanic scheme—a plot, apparently, to provoke war or revolt or anarchy throughout the world. Some group of Machiavellian munition-makers? Possibly. . . . A communist conspiracy to harass and destroy the capitalist countries? Possibly. . . . An underhanded Oriental attack upon the entire white race, with a view to weakening the European powers as a prelude to a war of conquest—a new manifestation of the Yellow Peril? Possibly. . . . A stratagem on the part of the countries defeated in the great war to get back their colonies? Possibly.

YET none of these explanations of itself seemed to fit the dread picture. Certain it was that the Speaking Idols were but a part of it. For now and then apparently either through error or carelessness in the broadcasting wave-length, the idols had spoken in a language unfamiliar to the local listeners—had spoken in Spanish diatribes against the Church and against a capitalist régime: evidently propaganda calculated to provoke class war in Spain or some other Spanish-speaking country. And similar speeches in one or two other languages had likewise been heard.

"Disaster!" the missionary wound up. "The blackest disaster that ever struck the world! It's brewing—over there." He raised himself on one elbow. He pointed through the window at the bare bleak hills, with the gaunt bush edging the farther summits in feathery outlines. "Ah,"—his voice leaped up extraordinarily strong,—"they mean to destroy what is most precious and decent in human life. They—" He sank back, exhausted.

JIM felt no doubt of the missionary's own belief: his sincerity rang through every word. And the man was dying. But—could such a thing be true? "How," he asked hesitantly, "have you—learned of this?"

"The evidence of my own ears, for one," replied the missionary bitterly. "I too have listened to the Voice of that—idol you saw last night here. And I understand Amharic—and Spanish. Two other men also, both dead now, as I shall soon be dead: John Smithford was another Lawrence of Arabia, but unhonored, unsung. He learned of that broadcasting station; tried to find it—and mayhap succeeded, for they killed him. He was my friend and confided in me. The other was one of their own hirelings, a poor renegade European known as Elim Cheknov. Dying of a wound got in some drunken quarrel, he tried to make his peace with God, and sent for me, and told me something of the business, though he was just a paid technician, and knew little of those who employed him.

"The names of two men in the conspiracy are known to me, however: Prince Igor Garatinsky, whom you have met; and an Arab—Si Othman Abdelkader. And I know that this Ethiopian affair is merely part of a world-wide scheme—though in itself it's dreadful enough. These people, you know, are Christians, of the Coptic sect. But Igor and his crew have here and elsewhere contrived to revive ancient idolatries such as you saw in that ju-ju temple. They've incited the people to renew their old-time slave-raids. They've even—but 'twould take too long to list their villainies. I tell you, Jim M'Gregor, I've

come to believe that the Bible story of a Prince of Evil is literal truth, and not mere allegory. There must yet be in this sad world men who have sold their souls to Satan. You—"

Frazer broke off, exhausted and panting; and for a moment Jim forbore to question him further. But when the fine old head was raised again, Jim looked at the blazing fanatic eyes and asked why he had not taken up the matter with the foreign embassies. "It is an international affair of tremendous importance; and surely—"

Simon Frazer laughed bitterly. "Do ye imagine, man, that I've been resting on my oars, that I haven't talked to the people who direct—aye, misdirect!—the world's destinies? And do you know what their answer was? They called me a trouble-maker. Tried to have me deported!" He clenched his right fist. "I preach the Gospel. I endeavor to follow its just precepts; I honor the Commandments. And I'm not taking the Lord's name in vain when I say: may Almighty God damn Europe's diplomats—Europe's usurers, all Europe's brutal, power-drunk, money-grabbing, hypocritical crew! A League of Nations? League of cowards—of thieves and burglars and liars and assassins! They know what's happening here. And what do they do? They meet in committees, there, at Geneva. They exchange polite notes and roll pious phrases over their tongues, while Italy's hosts march in Eritrea and Somaliland. Abyssinia will be beaten—not that it matters—"

Jim was astonished.

"IT doesn't matter?" he exclaimed; and Frazer gestured wearily.

"No—not so much. A nation which is vanquished today can rise triumphant tomorrow—or ten years from now, or a hundred. But it's the dreadful thing in back of this war. The excuse for it—the propaganda to convince public opinion that it is a righteous war. Slavery! Not the ordinary, domestic slavery which—there's no denying it—obtains in this land. There's less harm in it than ye think, and maybe an Abyssinian household slave is as well off as many a servant back home in Scotland. But real slavery doesn't exist here. Therefore it must be *made* to exist. Villages must be burned to the ground, human beings hunted like wild animals, old people slaughtered, men and women and little children carried off, yoked and chained, so that,"—with terrible irony,—"Europe may discover the evil in the course of time and rectify it, for the sake of civilization and progress! Nor, mind ye, am I blaming Italy more than the rest of Europe. They're all tarred with the same brush. And what concessions Italy may have made to the other powers, what agreements in exchange for a free hand here, we know not."

HE halted; then he added:

"That's where the Arab and the Russian come in. Slavers—do ye see? I found out. A dying sinner repented, and making his peace with God, told me the whole black story. I tried to stop it. It was my work. They learned I knew, and—they poisoned me. I'm dying too. Now—it's your work."

"Mine?"

"Yes. I've been wishing for somebody. Praying for somebody. Somebody young and strong and courageous, a man of deeds as well as words. Then you came. The Lord sent ye."

"But how can *I*—"

"How can ye *not?* Did ye not tell me ye believe in being decent and unselfish? And did ye not tell me ye came to Ethiopia in search of your manhood? Here's your chance to find it, M'Gregor."

"Too much of a chance—frankly. Besides, what earthly good would I be? I don't know the country—don't speak a single native language."

"Brown will be your guide and interpreter."

"You've said it, Reverend," agreed the negro.

Jim shook his head.

"Really, I don't see how I—"

"Afraid?"

A pause. Then: "Yes."

"I'm glad of it. It's the man who's afraid who makes the best fighter—because he gets so mad at himself—at his own fear. But you can carry on—you must carry on. Destroy that broadcasting station, and for a time at least this infamy will be stopped. I believe in fighting fire with fire. Find that lair of Satan. Provide yourself with a bit of dynamite—and the Lord God will speak with a louder voice than these idols."

"But—"

"You must!" Frazer's bony hand clutched the younger man's. "You must! It is a covenant between the Lord God and you and me! You must carry on my work! Ah,"—fervently,—"do you promise, M'Gregor?"

On a small table, by the side of the cot, was a cheap silver watch. It ticktocked through the silence. The ticktocking merged with the beating of Jim's heart. . . . Very suddenly, he decided.

"I promise."

Frazer smiled. It was a strangely sweet smile.

"I knew you would. I'm a persuasive man, am I not?" He went on, after a while: "A musician—aren't you? Well—maybe it's my native Scots conceit talking, but years ago, back home in Aberdeen, I was pretty good at the music myself. Grand at the bagpipes I was—and grand at the singing. There was chiefly one song. . . . Listen, lad!"

And he sang in a strong, clear voice:

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord;
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;
He hath loos'd the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword;
His truth is marching on. . . .

His words dropped to a whisper:

"Aye! A bonnie song—"

A shiver ran down his tall, gaunt frame. His eyes were wide, glazed a faded violet color. They stared sightlessly, like eyes of glass out of a statue. So he died.

IT was hours later.

Brown had gone to attend to various duties: the proper authorities had to be notified of Simon Frazer's demise; immediate burial had to be arranged—and decently arranged, with paid women mourners, according to the local custom, following the bier and yelling their throaty *"Yoo-yoo-yoo-yoo-yoo"* of professional, hysterical, unprofound grief. And—so Brown had explained—he would have to mind his step.

For here in Addis Ababa, where intrigue was rife and where everybody suspected everybody else, gossip and scandal filtered quickly through Greek café and Armenian shop and native marketplace, through Coptic church and consular office, through dive and caravanserai and tavern. Thus none must be allowed to guess that the humble servant, who looked so faithfully after the affairs of his dead master, was identical with the gorgeous savage chief who, occasionally, came to town from the wilderness.

Jim was alone. . . . He stood by the window. After a while he closed it, for he was unable to stand the smell which drifted in from the outside—the smell of the tropics: cloves and *khat* and mangoes and burning dried cattle-dung; blood and sweat and offal and pestilence. The putrid smell of corruption. Triumphant corruption, it seemed to him—the eternal African victory of matter over mind.

Africa, he reflected morosely, was a black land with a bright edge, like an abyss licked by a frame of fire. . . .

He cursed softly. What a fool he had been to give that promise—on the sentimental, emotional spur of the moment—to the missionary!

What did he care about what happened in Africa? Why should he meddle? What was it to him? He was an American. It was no fight of his. . . . He cursed softly as he reflected, that was the worst of being a composer. Just like a damned ham-actor. Always dramatizing himself; mouthing grandiose phrases, giving way to romantic impulses. . . . He was far from home. He was broke. And he was hungry. What he needed was a porterhouse steak smothered in pork chops!

He sighed. If he could find something to eat. . . .

He rummaged about. He discovered, on the bookshelf, a tin of English biscuits, a jar of mixed pickles, a half-filled bottle of port wine.

O.K. Would do for today's breakfast and yesterday's breakfast, lunch and dinner. Would *have* to do. And did very well indeed.

He finished both biscuits and wine, ate most of the pickles. He fished in his

pocket, found a crumpled cigarette. He smoked. He was beginning to feel better. All he minded was the silence: the gray silence of death.

Death there on the cot, covered by a sheet.

It made him nervous. He turned his back to the cot, saw the radio. He had always thought of it in terms of music, of entertainment. Now he obeyed its invitation. Tentatively he turned a knob.

Zz-mm-zz-mm . . . . brr-brr-brr.

Somebody talking over the air: An Austrian Jew broadcasting Italian propaganda in English with a French accent:

"It is the duty of Italy . . . . make an end of these intolerable conditions . . . . a blot on civilization . . . . brutality . . . . slavery . . . . the black-shirted legions of Rome . . . . the eagle of Rome screaming defiantly . . . . in spite of whatever sanctions the League of Nations may . . . . Mussolini . . . ."

JIM fiddled with the dial.

Zz-sst-zh . . . . brr-sh-brrr.

Somebody else talking over the air.

A Portuguese journalist broadcasting Ethiopian propaganda in French with an English accent:

"C'est le devoir du monde entier . . . . ce pays pauvre et héroique . . . . son cri de désespoir, comme le cri d'un oiseau fatigué et mélancolique . . . . l'amère désillusion . . . . la liturgie européenne d'ignorance, d'intolérance et de vanité . . . . Sa Majeste l'Empereur Haile Selassie . . . . pour la patrie."

Jim twirled the knob impatiently.

Just a lot of war bunk, he decided.

He had been a small child at the time of the World War. Still, he remembered vaguely. And here it was again, back at the old stand: the same thickening of the same sensational, mendacious ballyhoo, the same dull hate and the same shivery fear. The Old World committing suicide.

It had nothing to do with him. He was an American, a New Yorker. . . .

Gee, if he could catch Gotham's voice across the distance, along the air-waves!

He twisted the knobs—left, right, left, right, left, right, left . . . .

Come on, New York! Little old New York! Come on, Broadway! Come on, Coney Island! Come on, Central Park! Come on, Yankee Stadium!

Zz-rr . . . . zz-sh-zz . . . . brr-brr-sh.

Here she comes! Music. From far off. From across the mountains, the desert, the Atlantic, the Mediterranean.

A violin solo. Faint, at first. Then more distinct. And—why, he knew the guy who was handling the fiddle! He couldn't be mistaken: Ike Rosenbaum, from Third Avenue, made up as a Hungarian gypsy, over at the Imperial, on West Forty-seventh, strutting his stuff from table to table.

Jim laughed. Good old Ike! Listen to him! Say—will you listen to him! The haunting Strauss waltz, with its sweet and magic irony, filling the ornate grill-room at the Imperial—and filling the humble *chicka* hut here at Addis Ababa.

Then another station cutting in.

"Phil Scott's orchestra broadcasting from . . . . The little green pills in the big green box . . . . accept no substitutes. . . . Gossip of the day . . . . Berkeley Beverley in person."

Jim smiled expectantly. He steadied the dial to a hair-line.

He had known Berkeley Beverley *when*—indeed when the latter had not yet changed to Berkeley Beverley, but was still Moe Weinstein, a clever little vaudevillian from around Rivington Street. Somehow or other, he had got himself a columnist's job on a tabloid; had made an immediate and enormous success, envied, hated, quoted, aped, and occasionally horsewhipped; was today a walking record of the Roaring Forties, a living encyclopedia of all the scandal and dirt between Thirty-fourth and Columbus Circle. . . .

Here now came his flat, sarcastic East Side voice:

"Joan Crawford and Franchot Tone are this way and that . . . . Final vows will be exchanged almost any edition. . . . Princess Fanushka Kardonskaya and one of the fifty-seven Harks brothers

are baby-talking. . . . The Princess used to be Miss Kentucky of 1933 before Earl-Bathtub-Carroll discovered her. . . . Before that she was Susie Smith, born and bred on the boundless Noo Joisey prairies. . . . Two famous kodak planets, not yet Mexico-vorced, are building romansions in the air. . . . The Eric Parkers are talking about Reno-vating. . . . Speaking of folks heartistically inclined, orchids to Kathleen O'Grady, daughter of Dan O'Grady, the only multi-multi left us, these days, and to Sloane Van Vleet of Bar Harbor, Paris, Newport, the Ritz lounge and points adjacent. . . . Kathleen and Sloane are going to get merged this coming Saturday."

JIM flinched as if somebody had struck him a blow below the belt. He switched off the radio. It gave a little dry click of finality.

He said dully: "O.K."

His cigarette had gone out. He relit it—he shrugged.

Well, he told himself with an illusion of perfect, almost too perfect, composure and passiveness, that was that! Told himself so again, late that evening, when he and Brown started out on their long wilderness journey.

He had lost Kathleen. This particular chapter was closed. Now another chapter, terribly dangerous and rather vague, was about to begin.

The dead missionary had opened it for him, had turned the first page. But he himself must write the full story in the book of his life—the book of Africa; must write it with his own strength and courage and perseverance, without the help of love or personal ambition—and without the hindrance of love or personal ambition.

A crusade, Simon Frazer had called it. And Jim reflected that if not precisely a crusade where he was concerned, then it was, at all events, a high aim more important than the kiss of a woman's red mouth or the composing of the greatest symphony in the world—and this high aim was waiting for him somewhere up there in the wild Abyssinian highlands beyond the signal drums' thudding wall of sounds.

A crazy aim. Brown and he, two lonely men, to stem a tide, an avalanche! To crush a world-wide conspiracy?

No chance.

Still, he decided with a certain youthful bravado, it was up to them to make the attempt. . . .

They plodded through the night that towered black, immense. They left Addis Ababa behind them. They climbed the ragged summit of Entoto, descended between steep banks; again, many hours later, took to climbing, up the abrupt tiers of a cañon at the bottom of which a river ran to swell the Blue Nile far in the south.

Each carried a water-canteen; each also a canvas bag that held cartridges and four sticks of dynamite, with caps and fuse, which Brown had somehow obtained; some precious packages of matches, strips of dried meat, salt and a small quantity of millet flour to be baked on hot stones. Brown, naked except for a loin-cloth, was armed with dagger, revolver and two tall spears. Jim had found a rifle among the missionary's belongings—an old French *chassepot* which had been converted into a single-barreled shotgun, with a bolt action for loading and unloading.

It was as light a kit as they could do with. Really no more than the bare necessities. But Jim tired quickly.

With every mile his bag grew heavier. The rifle's strap rubbed his shoulder raw. His skin itched. A red-headed jigger bit him savagely in the ankle. A hippo-fly got into his ear. A wait-a-bit thorn vine whipped his left leg with its treacherous backward-hooked blade. He stumbled, stretched out a hand to keep from falling, touched a candelabra cactus that lacerated him with its poisonous spiked leaves.

For years to come, the memory of this first trek—in a way, he would explain, it was the worst—was like a nightmare which set his whole body to aching. He would recall the pain of the rugged interminable paths, up and down, up and down; of seeing, dimly through the darkness, the slim trail stretching on and on and on; the dizziness when he tight-roped along ridges where the ground dropped away on both sides in sheer pitches for hundreds of feet; the places where the grass was sun-dried until it was as slippery as ice; the land-slips where he had to fight every inch of the way, sliding back as fast as he moved forward, clawing at boulder and tree-root, his shoes filled with gravel—and the heat, the sweat, his lungs pumping, his heart beating against his ribs like a trip-hammer.

YET he kept on, hour after agonized stubborn hour, while the moon guttered out like a dirty tallow-dip, and night

gave way to morning. Sometime back, the wooden signal drums had ceased their talk. Now they began again.

Rub-rub-rub-rumbeddy-rumbeddy-rub, rose their nasal, ironic chant. . . . *Rub-rub-rub-rub-rumbeddy-rumbeddy-rub*—sobbing and zumming and humming; then a breathless pause; followed by a hollow *bang!* like an exclamation mark.

Rub-rub-rub—thumping with the impetus of a physical shock, advancing steadily, then receding in a way that seemed sinister, morose, a tragedy of uncomplete achievement.

The sounds excited Jim, exhilarated him. He felt less tired. Instinctively he kept step with the rhythm.

BROWN turned. "Boss," he said, "that am the local N.B.C."

"I know."

Oh, yes, he knew—had heard it nightly in Addis Ababa; the Morse code of all Africa, picking up rumor and gossip, truth and lie from negro villages and Arab oases; sending it on in minor, vibrating tone waves. . . .

Rub-rub-rub-rumbeddy-rub-rub—droning out of the south with the tale of tribal feud in Ogaden; of a Kaffa trading-station wiped out by black-water fever; of rinderpest striking the long-horned cattle of the Arussi Gallas. . . .

Droning out of the west with the tale of the wife of a prominent *ras* caught by her husband in a spicy adventure with a *feringhee* prospector. . . .

Droning out of the north with the tale of a Danakil medicine-man brewing dread mysteries; of a child lately born, on the banks of the Awash River, with three legs, seven arms and two faces—an evil omen for Abyssinia, yet less evil than that recently reported in a grove of mivinji trees near Mount Dabita, a *ngoloko,* a horned devil seven feet tall, seen in broad daylight. . . .

Droning out of the east with the tale that the Italian invasion was a fact; a grim, brutish fact, rushing across villages and fields like a sheet of smoldering flame, yellow, inexorable. . . .

Rub-rub-rumbeddy-rub—swelling, decreasing; breaking off sharply and unexpectedly, on a high note, like a dirge skirled on the bag-pipes. . . .

Silence.

They cut away from the main road, passing west of the village of Wara Malka. They crossed a broken, rock-studded plateau. Here and there a tangle of low undergrowth, tamarack and drin and dwarf oak and stunted carob and mimosa; nearly leafless shrubs, twisted and tortured by the force of the wind; and occasionally a clump of palmtrees, each a distinct little isle, standing single and solid and haughty amid the waste.

They talked over their plan. It was mad in its simplicity and simple in its madness. . . . Since this sinister broadcasting station, though apparently not under Italian auspices was yet functioning favorably to their cause, it would not necessarily be moved if it lay in the path of the advancing Roman legions. Yet the hazards of war would make such a location undesirable. Indeed John Smithford, that gallant Lawrence of Abyssinia who had lost his life, had believed this contingency foreseen, and that the station was presumably beyond the probable fields of battle. . . . And Smithford had been killed because of his knowledge.

A station of such power would require considerable apparatus—tall masts and a generating unit too heavy for a camel caravan unless specially designed in many small sections. Yet this was a land of few roads—as yet hardly any, indeed, suited to trucks. Could such an equipment be brought in by plane? Yes—provided adequate landing-fields. This narrowed the possibilities a good deal. Yet the maps of Ethiopia showed many blank spots.

M'Gregor proposed simply to journey to the region Smithford had suspected; and there through questioning by Brown, seek to learn if a strange caravan or airplane had passed.

THERE was, as the noon hour approached, an insolent nakedness, completely lifeless. For life in the desert is but a trivial incident, a negligible detail, uncared-for and unessential. So when, once in a while, there was a faint sign that life still existed—a carrion-hawk poised high in the parched sky on stiff black eager wings, a jackal loping through the sands like an evil gray thought, or a lonely wanderer trudging past with never a word of greeting—it was like an intrusion, a puerile challenge to the infinite, sardonic wilderness.

They spoke little. It was, Jim explained afterward, as if the land imposed silence, with its austerity, its blankness, its utter indifference to man and man's puny endeavor. Why, what did the wilderness care if Italy should win or Ethiopia? The wilderness had ex-

isted before Nineveh and Babylon. It would be long after Rome was no more—and Addis Ababa, and New York, and London. It was the only lasting thing, illimitable, unfinished, never to be finished. It was the core and soul of the eternal principle where all life was but momentary foam.

THEY made camp in a small oasis filled by the ghosts of forgotten wayfarers. They ate their frugal meal; stretched out on the bare ground. Brown dropped immediately into a light doze. Jim was unable to sleep.

He listened to the night noises: the humming and clicking of the myriad insects; the distant growl of a hunting lioness that began in a deep basso and peaked to a sharp treble; the chirp and whistle of innumerable monkeys; a barking deer exploding in an unexpected *waugh* a few yards away; a herd of tiny dik-dik scudding nervously through the dense undergrowth; a hornbill flopping his clumsy way out of the rubber-creeper that festooned a muzauli tree, bringing down a shower of beetles; a leopard coughing discontentedly; on the very edge of the clearing a jackal's wailing call—*hee-ha! ohee-ha! huaa-ha!*—his mates joining in, one, two, three, six, a dozen, individual notes that gradually merged into the piercing dirge of the full jackal chorus.

The symphony of the wilderness! And again, slashing across it, the muffled pulse of the signal drums.

The sounds awakened Brown. He sat up, leaned forward. He seemed excited.

"What's the matter?" asked Jim.

"Hush! Ah wants to hear whut they're sayin'."

"Oh, you know the drum-talk?"

"Ah'll tell the world!"

He threw himself flat down, one ear pressed against the ground. The drums tattooed in a droning frenzy—*rub-rub-rumbeddy-rub* — pause — *rub-rub-bang!* They stopped abruptly; and Brown got to his feet.

"Yo' and me's on the spot," he announced.

"Eh?"

"Them two yeggs—the Russian and the Arab—found out about us sooner'n Ah thought they would. We gotta beat it." He picked up his weapons, his canvas bag and water-canteen. "Ah knows a place where Ah reckon we'll be safe. But we can't let no grass grow under our dawgs."

He led the way. All that night they trekked, and half the next day, with short periods of rest, one sleeping while the other was on guard.

Jim was getting his second wind. He was conscious less of fear than of a certain dull anger—anger against the wilderness that seemed to stare at him with a furtive tenseness of watching, listening. Walls had ears, he reflected, in America. But here, in Africa, the very heat-waves, the rays of the sun, the wind-piled sand, even the insects, the driver-ants and hippo-flies and big purblind, bat-winged flying-beetles, seemed to spy; to be in league with the powers of evil.

Toward noon Brown suddenly halted, his hand on Jim's arm, and listened intently.

A few minutes later, his suspicions were confirmed—as, "Quick!" came his tense whisper, while he drew the other into the shelter of a man-high, ball-shaped, dust-gray thorn-bush.

Then crunching footsteps, and a number of men dashed past; Arussi warriors, led by a tall chief whose body was plastered with white clay and accompanied each by his slave who carried his master's belongings.

They were a noisy lot, talking bastard Kaswahili, a curious mixture of African clicks and Arab gutturals.

"Haya bandika! Bandika ho!" came the throaty call of one of them as, after the manner of African porters, he gave the load on his head a resounding thwack with a cudgel to prove to all the world that he indeed was a porter among porters, a strong man balancing a heavy load with ease and cheer. Came an answering chorus of boasting calls and thwacks, a short silence; and then, just as the first of the porters drew in line with the thorn-bush which hid Jim and Brown, a hushed dramatic whisper.

IT was the chief speaking, and he stopped stock-still as he spoke:

"Hapa karibu sana! Here, just beside!"

Jim's heart pumped. Had the man seen him? Was this the end?

The next moment, he smiled in relief.

"Hapa karibu sana!" the chief whispered again, pointing; and Jim knew what it was.

For directly in front of the thorn bush, its ugly little body half covered by the lower growth of spikes, a baby wart-hog had rolled itself into a frightened, grayish-drab ball.

Came a downward thrust with a spear which missed Jim's right foot by a few inches, a pitiful squeal, a plum-colored paw fingering in the spikes; then a clicking, smacking chorus of rejoicing as the small animal was dropped into a *posho*-bag. There would be full stomachs in camp tonight round the cook pots: tender wart-hog meat well stewed with onions and rice and wild hibiscus leaves, flavored with *sin-sin* seeds and pleasantly sharpened with pulverized red ants.

"Haya bandika! Bandika ho!" again —and the Arussis trotted into the south, vanishing like black ghosts in the crackling underbrush.

A FULL half-hour the two Americans waited; then they turned once more down the trail, through the gathering dusk where jungle and desert and gaunt naked hills were merging in a single sheet of luminous purple. Brown spoke about the chief of the Arussis. He knew him well.

Ngogo—which meant gorilla—was his name. He was powerful and influential among his people; friendly with the medicine-men and deep in the confidence of Garatinsky and Abdelkader. His village was a considerable distance the other side of Addis Ababa. He had not been there on the night of the juju sacrifice. Therefore, reasoned the negro, Garatinsky, by whatever means, must have found out, within a few hours of the time when they had set out on their journey, that he, Brown, was double-crossing him; the signal drums must have brought immediate warning and instructions to Ngogo; and the latter must have hastened by forced marches and shortcuts, to catch them on their way.

"How did he guess," inquired Jim, "what direction we were going to take?"

"There wasn't no guessin' about it. That jigaboo naturally reckoned I'd be high-tailin' it home. And—remember, boss?—we met one or two people. They must have thought it phony: yo' and me beatin' it north in such a hurry, yo' bein' white folk."

Jim inclined his head. That's what he had felt straight along: the wilderness spying on him, the furtive tenseness of watching, listening.

"It's our slowin' up and doublin' on our tracks," added the negro, "that saved our bacon."

"It isn't saved yet."

"Aw, shucks! We'll be all right as soon as we gits to Mount Wasu."

"But surely," argued Jim, "Garatinsky has other allies hereabouts."

"You've said it."

"Well, won't the signal drums—"

"Keep on talkin'? Yes suh. That's why we gotta avoid meetin' people. And Mount Wasu aint far off—and no black man ever goes there."

"Why not?"

"They dassen't. Because,"—Brown's voice was queerly thin and hushed,—"of the Silent Ones.

"The Silent Ones," he repeated, "the *Eku Mekus.*"

They were, it appeared, a secret society that had its governing lodge, as far as was known, on the African West Coast, on the upper banks of the Niger, somewhere in behind Asaba; a society more feared than the Brotherhood of the Leopard, whose adherents belonged mostly to the Nupe, Igbira and Borgu tribes, who were experts in black magic and whose chief deity was Shango, the lord of night.

No white man, nor even the cleverest half-caste bush spy, had ever discovered where their central ju-ju, their "Long Ju-ju," was located. None had ever found out who was their king and whence and why came the orders which, suddenly, would cause the signal drums to drone along the Niger, telling the *Eku Meku* warriors to meet in some clearing, deep-hidden in the jungle, and to start out on one of their periodical raids. . . . Raids neither for profit nor

revenge. Raids, simply, for the sake of killing.

There would be no warning of any sort. But some morning a peaceful village would awaken to the fact that it was completely surrounded by thousands of tall naked savages, most of them daubed with white pigment. They would be squatting in a circle, perfectly still, sinister, utterly silent—thence their name. Silently they would rise; silently move forward, like one man; silently—with the villagers paralyzed by awe, too frightened to fight or seek escape—they would kill.

A NUMBER of years earlier—Brown did not know how long ago—the *Eku Mekus* had gathered again. Fantastically, incredibly, with nobody aware of their long trek, nobody to give the alarm along the many hundreds of miles, they had crossed half the Black Continent, from the Niger through Bornu and Wadai and the southern Soudan into western Abyssinia. There it had been as always. A peaceful village had been surrounded. The Silent Ones had squatted in a circle, had moved forward to the killing.

Yet there had been one exception.

An Amhara *ras* had happened to spend the preceding night in the doomed settlement. A brave man, not the one to die without a struggle, without taking toll, and he had been armed with a revolver.

He had taken careful aim, had sent a bullet crashing into the heart of the man who led the attackers.

Late that evening the chief wizard of the Silent Ones had gone into the jungle to make *magani*—black medicine. He had prayed to Shango, the lord of night.

"Where," he had asked, "shall be our king's sepulture?"

"On the slopes of Mount Wasu," the wind had soughed answer.

There they had taken the body, wrapping it in a hide stripped off a white steer. Twelve strong warriors had kept vigil until the hide had become hard and dry. From time to time they had rocked the bundle upon their knees; and when at last the rattling sound had told of complete dessication, the wizard had announced that the king was really and truly dead.

So a grave had been dug. It had been large enough to hold the body and—they had stepped proudly, unflinchingly, heads carried high—the twelve warriors. They had knelt around the corpse; had been buried with it.

Then the wizard had danced upon the grave, declaring the place to be holy ground, chanting curses, in uncouth rhymes, upon anybody who should ever set foot on the slopes of Mount Wasu.

Years ago it had happened. . . .

It had happened, reflected Jim, in the almost prehistoric days when Franklin D. Roosevelt had not yet matriculated at Harvard; when jazz was known as ragtime; when Broadway looked down upon Hollywood; when all nations trembled at Germany's saber-rattling; when rouge and lipstick were synonymous with scarlet sin; when, in Kansas and Indiana, women were fined for smoking cigarettes in public; when the older J. P. Morgan was the czar of the world's money marts; when Ethiopia was a blank spot on the map; and when, in Italy, a laborer by the name of Benito Mussolini was thrown into jail for his radical utterances.

So many years ago!

But to this day, said Brown, the taboo of the Silent Ones held. No Abyssinian, Christian or Moslem or pagan, dared set foot on the slopes of Mount Wasu.

"And," added Brown, "I aint blamin' 'em."

"You don't mean," demanded Jim, "that you're scared too?"

"Scared? Mah foot! But Ah's careful. Still, Ah reckons Ah'd rather trust a dead negro's curse than a live negro's sword. Let's go."

THE shadows lengthened. The short tropical twilight swooned into the instantaneous tropical night.

They camped in a clearing, one sleeping while the other watched. At daybreak they were off again. Both men were silent: Brown with the negro's happy faculty which permitted him to think of nothing whatsoever and thus clear his mind in moments of nervous stress; Jim prey to a tense sensation that any second he might stop short at the edge of creation and look down over the precipice into a black, illimitable void.

He felt the heat like a stabbing pain. It seemed to him as if Ethiopia, Africa, the whole world, had shrunk to a mote of star-dust whirling crazily in the sun's immense white dazzle.

He ached in every muscle. A bad sore was on his left leg where the wait-a-bit thorn had slashed him. His face and neck and hands were red-blotched with innumerable insect bites. He was dirty, unkempt. Yet he was not really unhappy.

Afterward he used to say that at the time he had not minded his physical sufferings. On the contrary, these sufferings helped him to bear the heavy burden of the task which Simon Frazer had put upon his shoulders. In a way, he would explain, it was patriotism. Not patriotism toward America—for what had America to do with Ethiopia? But the pride which comes to a man like a deep, mysterious consciousness when, alone among foreigners, he feels a racial or national pulse-beat; something like a specific challenge daring him to prove that he has the strength and courage to finish what he has begun.

So he clamped his jaws, tightened his muscles, lengthened his stride.

OCCASIONALLY, in the distance, the signal drums would thud their nasal, vibrating cadence. But Brown, interpreting thump by thump and pause for pause, said that their message had nothing to do with them. It was the war-cry of the Lion of the Tribe of Judah; the drums droning everywhere, north, east, south, west, bidding the people to rally and fight for their country.

"Do you think," asked Jim, "that any of them are likely to cross our path?"

"Yes suh." The negro pointed straight ahead where, beyond the trees, the end of the jungle wavered in a blotchy line of yellow sand. Over there, he explained, one of the main caravan roads cut through the wilderness and led toward the capital; and he went on: "Can't affo'd to let any of them boogies see us. Fo' me, bein' black, they'll draft into the a'my. And yo', bein' white—well, right now them savages thinks all whites are Eyetalians and treat 'em as such."

So, time and again, hearing a crunching of feet, they would scurry for cover. Safe in the bush, they would watch men swing along on their way to Addis Ababa.

Guraghis would come, unwashed, ragged, odorous, mostly acting as porters. Short, bandy-legged Gallas with screaming voices and exaggerated gestures, some armed with spears and swords and elliptical rhinoceros-hide shields, some with elephant smooth-bores, others with ancient, rusty breech-loaders. Shankallas, with broad scarlet bands painted down the length of their flat noses. Naked junglies, their teeth filed to a fine point, their fleshy lower lips weighted down with inserted copper disks. Sudanese from beyond the border, not subjects of Haile Selassie, but joining for the sheer love and sport of fighting; powerful wide-shouldered men, their bodies reeking with green palm-oil, frantic with glee at the thought of bloodshed, brandishing their daggers, leaping up and down like madmen, tossing their long lances tufted with ostrich feathers high in the air, reckless where they fell.

They would pass in knots of twos and threes and fours—in dozens. Once there was a couple of score, trotting like dogs, commanded by a curly-bearded up-country noble, crowned by a wide-brimmed, saffron-yellow hat, and astride a white stallion whose mane was dyed scarlet in sign of strife.

Came a horde of Somalis, slender, clean, brown-skinned men with delicate, handsome features and fine wide-set eyes, their heads either shaven or painted with ochre. They were led by their head man, picturesque but incongruous with an orange-and-blue-checkered blanket wrapped round him, a white cork helmet tilted well back on his forehead, a very large and battered umbrella tucked under his left arm, and a wicked short spear grasped in his right hand: marshaling and bullying his men with the raucous accents and curt manners of a top sergeant.

Came others, gorgeous central African warriors of many races: chiefs wearing busbies made of the head and mane of a lion, capes of hawks' feathers floating from their shoulders, round their thin legs anklets made of the long hair of the collabus monkey, broad swords thrust through rude leather belts, knobkerries poised in brawny fists, emblazoned shields across their backs.

More came—more and more, obeying the rallying-cry of the Lion of the Tribe of Judah:

"Gather in, my children! Gather in!"

LIKE illustrations from a fantastic book of travel they seemed to Jim, hinting at fabulous, incredible legends. The legends of yesteryear; and here—why, here they were turned into living, grim, historical fact that was emphasized by the stamping of feet and the hard clatter of iron.

He was excited, keenly elated. Almost he applauded, as though he were watching some great pageant. Almost he shouted: "Encore! Encore!" as the last of the tribesmen vanished in the bush.

The road was clear again. Jim and Brown trekked on, through another day. . . . That day also sank to its close.

Mount Wasu was not far off. It towered rugged and stark and ominous; was taken by the west in a pearl-gray cloak of mist which held a measure of purple; and with night near, the stars began trailing their clusters across the horizon.

The wind fled singing around the trees. It increased, driving down with a wailing, tearing violence; and on the wings of it, came another patter of feet. Once more they scurried for cover, behind a miniature butte of pink sandstone. The sounds approached. Not only the hurrying feet. Also, louder and ever louder, the hollow drumming of horses' hoofs; the whine and whicker of ill-tempered camels; the dull rubbing of spears; the shrill, hectic call of ivory horns. A host on the march, thought Jim, as he heard, steadily growing in volume, a savage humming and zumming which presently crystallized into full-throated song.

MONTHS later, Jim used both tune and words—Brown translated them for him—in his musical show "Swords South," which was destined to make a sensation on Broadway. And here he listened to it now; a pæan of triumph and hate thrown to the evening sky by thousands of voices.

The chant rolled on. It grew, immensely, magnificently, as round the bend of the road, men swept into view. Seasoned, hard-bitten troops, these, belonging to some great up-country *ras*.

Infantry first, in military formation; companies of a hundred each, tramping ten abreast; khaki-clad, armed with modern rifles, efficiently led, swinging along with a will; each detachment preceded by a standard-bearer carrying a flag with the symbol of the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. Squadrons of cavalry whose accouterments—two-handed swords, battle-axes and javelins and heavy shields studded with iron bosses and prongs—spoke eloquently of the Middle Ages; broad-backed mules dragging a couple of light field-cannon that had cost the *ras* the revenues of half his villages. A troop of Somalis mounted upon camels, nodding in their lofty saddles to the deep, swaying gait of their animals.

The rear was brought up by the camp-followers: the men in charge of the pack mules; the warriors' wives, their babies astride their wabbly hips and themselves astride tiny donkeys that were hardly visible beneath the loads; the itinerant merchants; the sutlers; the turbaned Christian priests; the slaves driving herds of steers and flocks of sheep and goats. And on both sides of the advancing column, rode the irregulars: men of many races, black and brown and yellow, darting by like winged phantoms; bearded giants, strange and terrible figures, erect in their square silver stirrups, with heads thrown back and muskets held aloft, and lean youngsters in their teens, perched like monkeys on their high-peaked saddles; tossing up their weapons, catching them again, giving their throaty battle-cries: *"Ai-yai-yai! W'allahi! Hon! Hon!"*

Yells, shrieks, the blaring of ivory horns, the rumble of the field-pieces, the neighing of horses, the grunting of camels—crash and clank and clatter—the dramatic cacophony of an Ethiopian army on the march.

On! The forest of swords—the dazzling glitter of tall spears! On—the fluttering of the flags!

On—toward Addis Ababa; while on, in the opposite direction, trekked two lonely men.

On—through yet another day.

Through hours when the pitiless path led across low, thorny bush where the wind, boomed back by the copper-glowing hills, was as the blast of a lime-kiln; and where the sun, poised like a gigantic balloon, melted all colors into a blurred, swimming milky-white. Hours of pelting, steaming rain that generated yet greater heat. Hours when even the big happy-go-lucky Theodore Roosevelt Brown bemoaned the days of long ago back home in Georgia, where, during the week, he had rolled bales of cotton down a gangplank, while on Sundays he had led the choir of the First African Baptist Church in singing "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot."

AT the shock of noon they reached Mount Wasu.

A jungle clad the slopes—a great sea of vegetation which, oddly, mixed familiar American plants—barberry and bracken and honeysuckle and blueberry—with African mountain growths: euphorbia and saxifrage and sun-dew, bizarre of silhouette, gigantic in height, unseemly in exaggerated spread. A throbbing, exuberant, extravagant surge of life. But life, thought Jim, that was innately vicious and harmful. Beauty here, brilliance, grace of color and form; yet steeped in poison and decay.

The negro said: "Here we are, suh. Follow me close. Step as Ah steps, stop

as Ah stops, turn as Ah turns. Jis' yo' do w'at Ah does."

They entered the forest. Its walls enclosed them with a greenish gloom, a shimmer of wavering golden mist. In the leaf-filtered sun-rays the trees were like pillars of pallid light, and the underbrush like waves of indigo blotched with crimson and silver and tawny orange.

Brown led the way. He had drawn his broad dagger, used it to cut a path.

Whit-whit-whit, went the blade.

Hack and slash through the green, sappy tunnel. . . . Hack—slash! Twice: once near the root, and once at shoulder-height—and the tall mazauli tree fell away, but the upper branches remained suspended in mid-air, held up by a great liana spotted with waxen, odorous orchids.

A clearing, a breath of cooler air. Step a little more briskly, relieved of the intolerable burden that comes with constant stooping and bending. . . . Then the jungle again, stretching out fingers to enlace you, hold you, strangle you.

Hack—slash—hack!

Not at all like Central Park—eh?

Push along. . . . The negro pointing:

"A trail—somethin' passed here—a wild hog, lookin' fo' a water-hole—or mebbe one o' them big apes."

Didn't look like a trail to Jim. Just a few fugitive tracks in the dim, smelly mire which bubbled and sucked; which seemed to reach out for those who dared tread the foul solitude.

He followed the negro.

Minute after minute he watched the tall, swaying figure—alert, tense, putting his feet down in the oozy prints made by the other; twisting left and right as the other twisted left and right; halting as the other halted; doing it automatically. And when, all at once, without warning of any sort, the negro turned and retraced

Stumbling and staggering, the Somali approached — was about to climb into the saddle. But just then Brown's right foot struck him in the chest.

his steps, Jim swung on his heel, walked back.

Brown hurried; Jim did likewise. . . . They reached the little clearing, where Brown stopped.

"What happened?" Jim demanded nervously. "What did you see?"

"Nuthin'." The negro grinned. "Ah smelled."

"Some wild animal?"

"No suh. Ah smelled—men. Somebody's up in yonder a ways."

"But you told me—"

"No black folks ever comes here—that's w'at Ah said—niggers am scared stiff. But—Ah smelled white folk."

"Oh,"—incredulously—"what are you giving me!"

"Ah did," the other insisted. "And now Ah's goin' to see if Ah can find em. Yo' wait here, Boss."

He sped away, vanished from sight; and Jim was alone.

He sat there, leaning against a palm. It was getting late. What better place for a secret broadcasting station, he mused, than this mountain which was taboo? But no truck or caravan could travel here, nor could an airplane land. Evidently this could not be the place; he and Brown must look elsewhere for it. He watched the sky fade to a sort of decayed brown. He watched the trees show their underleaves of white and silver as the evening wind turned them over; watched the forest begin to jerk out its arms of shadows; they stretched, inch by inch, lengthening gradually, like pieces of rubber cut in a broken, grotesque pattern, until they covered most of the clearing with long ragged stripes and wavery lines; watched the crimson of the sinking sun drop like a bright sword among the feathery tufted grass.

THEN Brown returned.

Rapidly he asserted that he had been right. Halfway up the slope, not far from a sandstone ridge along which anybody crossing Mount Wasu from south to north had to pass, two white men were in hiding. He knew them both: Pete Fabricius, a Boer; and Joe Guerreiro, a Portuguese from Mozambique. They were old-timers in this part of the world, former prospectors, unscrupulous adventurers in the pay of Garatinsky and Abdelkader. In obedience to the slave-raiders' signal drums, they must have trekked overland from the direction of the Kabanna River; and here they were now—waiting.

"Waiting for us?" Jim asked inanely.

"They aint waitin' fo' Santa Claus. Well—we gotta git a move on. It's gittin' mighty da'k fo' shootin'."

"Sh-shooting?" stammered Jim.

"Yes suh." Brown spoke casually, without the slightest vindictiveness. "Ah found a place where we can pop off them two bozos as neat as poppin' off birds."

A CHILL dropped into Jim's soul. He realized, even as he argued with Brown, that the man was right; that in the end he would have to do as the other bade him; that he would have to kill, deliberately, in cold blood; that all his arguing was no more than the search for a cowardly refuge from the reproach of his thoughts.

"You can't mean it!" he exclaimed.

"Ah does," was the stolid reply.

"To shoot from ambush? Without—without giving them a chance?"

"Listen: would yo' give a skunk a chance to take a squirt at yo'?"

"But—"

"No dice, Boss!"—with a trace of impatience. "It's either them or us. And Ah don't propose it's goin' to be us—not me, leastways."

He loosened the revolver in its holster. Without another word he was on his way. Without another word Jim followed. Not back along the trail which they had used before, but bearing sharply over to the left. Climbing steadily upward, fighting steadily through.

Heat, thirst, struggle, aching limbs, utter exhaustion. Minute after minute. . . . Minutes that to Jim seemed like eternities.

Eternities of despair and fear—and he minded the despair less than the fear. For fear was passive, while despair was active. Despair was alive. It was healthy; it was normal. It meant revolt against the intolerable sendings of fate. It meant rage. It meant that he gnashed his teeth and clenched his fists. It meant that he cursed the wilderness, the insects, the sweat, the stench, the tearing thorns and tripping, treacherous vines. But it meant, too, that he fought on, climbed on, carried on.

On, on!

Finally reaching a jutting rock above the jungle, near the summit of Mount Wasu; and Brown stopping, pointing.

Below and to the left was a ledge well sheltered by a screen of tall bushes. A little campfire sent up slender gray spirals of smoke that swayed and eddied,

filling the twilight with the aromatic scent of burning wood. A highly polished signal drum caught the reflections of the ruddy embers.

Jim saw two men. One lay comfortably stretched out, flat on his back, a rifle by his side. The second, with rifle across his knees, was staring tensely down the slope; he was the smaller of the two, dark, bearded, heavy-set.

"That's Joe Guerreiro," whispered the negro, squinting along the barrel of his revolver. "Ah'll take him. Yo' take Pete Fabricius."

"Pete Fabricius," Jim repeated to himself, "Pete Fabricius."

The words, the name, started a sequence of thoughts in his brain: a dovetailed program of what he had to do. He would have to lift his gun, take careful aim—very careful, since it was getting darker and darker; press back the trigger; kill—kill a man of whose very existence he had been ignorant half an hour earlier.

He shivered, swallowed hard. He moved his shoulder a little, as if to push away an obstacle—the obstacle of his throbbing, aching conscience.

Again the other's whisper:

"Are yo' ready?"

"Yes."

"Ah'll count to seven."

"All right, all right."

He brought up his weapon. . . .

"One—two—three—"

So terribly slow. So terribly fast—

"Fo'—five—six—"

His finger crooked the trigger. . . .

"Seven!"

Then, an accident.

JUST as Brown fired, bringing down his man, Jim's foot slipped and twisted on a pebble. A split second later, before Jim had time to fire, Pete Fabricius had leaped to his feet, looked up, raised his rifle, blazed away.

The American heard a whirring sound, heard the smack of the bullet against a rock in back of him.

Then he took aim, slowly, with utmost care. It was his life or the other's.

A roaring detonation, a sheet of yellow flame. . . . Pete Fabricius giving a high-pitched, rather astonished cry. His tall body falling.

Jim stared, prey to reaction.

"You see," he said afterward, "I suppose I should have been conscience-stricken. Should have been shocked, disgusted with myself. But I wasn't."

On the contrary, he was aware of a certain not unpleasant feeling of fullness, completion, even pride, as he reflected that this man down there had worked for an evil, inhuman cause; that it was his hand which had brought death to this man. He looked at his hand. It was quite steady. There was a thrill in the tips of his fingers, a thrill in his heart, a thrill running down his spine. And in his brain a sensation like the effects of some agreeably stimulating drug.

He heard the negro say, "That's that," saw him climb down to the ledge.

"What are you going to do?"

Brown laughed.

"Boss," he said, "Ah's goin' beat the drum."

Jim joined the negro.

"What's the big idea?" he demanded.

"Ah aims to let the world know that we-all is dead—that there aint no mo' use botherin' about us."

HE squatted on his heels, tipping the drum forward a little, balancing it between his knees. He rubbed it with a slow, insistent, scientific rhythm, sending out droning, sobbing tone-waves that winged into the night where the farther drums took up the tale and carried it South, West, North, East.

Rub-rub-rub-rumbeddy-rumbeddy-rub . . . a message to two men, a *feringhee* and an Arab . . . . *Rumbeddy-rumbeddy-rub-rub* . . . . Let those in the know bring word to them . . . . *Rub-rub-rumbeddy-rumbeddy-bang!* . . . . Word that Pete Fabricius and Joe Guerreiro have done their work well—that up on Mount Wasu the carrion-hawks are flying to the feast; the jackals will not feel the belly-pinch of hunger for days. . . .

Brown got up. Jim said:

"Let me have a go at that drum."

He beat it loudly, resoundingly; and the other remonstrated:

"Lawd! Yo' don't know nothin' about it."

"Don't I? Listen!" And he came down hard, with both fists, on the tightly stretched skin.

"But w'at yo' tryin' say—and to who?"

"A message"—Jim's laugh was almost hysterical—"to New York—Broadway—Park Avenue and Fifth! A message to those chiseling heels along Tinpan Alley! A message to a stuck-up old millionaire and to his daughter Kathleen! Telling 'em all that I'm finding what I set out to find! Telling 'em all"—again he banged the drum—"to go to hell!"

"Even the lady, suh?" inquired Brown, grinning with a flash of white teeth.

"Chiefly the lady!"

And Jim gave the drum a violent kick that sent it tumbling down the slope.

THE memory of the long weary weeks that followed was never distinct in Jim's mind. When friends, later, asked for the details of this fantastic and incredible journey of two lonely Americans through the brooding heart of Abyssinia, he would shake his head rather helplessly.

Details?

Why, at the time they had seemed unimportant, quite negligible. He wasn't an explorer or a scientist, gathering a mass of ethnological material to weave into a fat tome, so that other explorers or scientists might cavil and find fault and call him a liar. He was out to attend to his job, a decent job entrusted to him by a dead missionary: to match his craft and pluck against those of an evil, unscrupulous conspiracy.

Of course his inner mind, his perception, was occupied with the knowledge that he was not wanted here in Africa, that he was trespassing upon the destinies of a continent which hated him and his race, which would kill him, given the chance. And with every mile of the long wilderness pull, with every river forded and settlement stealthily skirted, there grew in him that realization of utter impotence which comes in Africa to a thinking white man; the realization that whatever occurred in these villages and jungles and deserts—obscene ritual dances and ceremonies, human sacrifice, child murder—that all these unspeakable things had a meaning to the native, a weighty reason and rational cause, but no meaning to the white interloper looking on and pitying and sneering from the prejudiced height of his own civilization.

Still, there was his task—mad, quixotic, doomed to failure. But he must try it, must do his best. Not only because he had given a promise to Simon Frazer, but because it was his duty. Too, because of the adventure itself—he welcomed and embraced it with an almost sensuous avidity. And if, occasionally, he thought of Kathleen, the thoughts were mostly subconscious; and if at odd moments they entered the direct focus of his consciousness, suffused with bitter pain at having lost her, he escaped the gloomy memories by stepping boldly into the bright light of his self-knowledge. For he told himself that whatever had happened to him in the past, and whatever the future might bring, the present was his, gloriously his. He was living now—yes, living life to the full, enjoying the keen thrill and zest of it in spite of the dust and dirt and sweat, the wretched food, the brackish water, the aching limbs, the dangers. He was paying the price of manhood. Nor was he finding the cost too high. And day after day he became more positive, more hard—as if, he reflected, some massive energy was surging through him like a tide of unknown power, driving the uncertainties and misgivings of youth away with the strength of tremendous values.

They pushed on; and it seemed that along with them half Ethiopia was in motion. Time and again they had to scurry for cover to evade the recurrent lines of savage warriors, hurrying south in serried ranks to war.

On the thirty-ninth day out of Addis Ababa, a little beyond Kaduni, they came to the central reaches of the Awash River—it was a mass of wavering color, like sunlight upon wind-fluttered silk. On the farther bank the swamp bordering it was several inches under water, a steaming expanse spotted with hillocks of thick chocolate-brown mud, floored and streaked with purple bands and rainbow-glowing blotches, and with infusions of clear emerald where an occasional young tree was trying to battle against the miasmic corruption.

ON the forty-first day they reached the Galulu plain; there Brown made good his boast that, give him a rope, and he'd soon enough find camel or mule to fit it.

Camels, as it happened; and appropriated by the negro with no worse trouble than a splitting headache, the result of having shared a couple of quarts of vile Greek brandy with a Somali roughneck from the train of *ras* Gouskar Jesu Ayoulú, an Amhara baron who was moving through that part of the country to levy tribute of cattle and grain for his imperial master, and who had made camp on the outskirts of a village, to the villagers' fear and impotent anger.

Not that they minded the tribute. Theirs was a rich land; their oxen were many and fat, and their granaries well filled. Besides, they were loyal to their overlord, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah; and was he not at war, holy war, against

the foreigners, the Italians, the accursed?

But the *ras* was lawless and ruffianly and grasping. So were his retainers. They were not soldiers or patriotic tribesmen, but *zabanias*, hired gangsters of half a dozen unsavory races, the sweepings of the Addis Ababa gutters. Crooked-mouthed they were, and crooked-brained, brawny to the ankles, blood staining their hands and their souls, coarse and bullying in their manners and foul in their speech, quick at pilfering, at picking quarrels, at slitting throats, at kissing crimson lips be they willing or unwilling. . . . "Though, by Allah the One!" boasted Hassan Ali, a Somali Moslem in charge of the *ras*' own horses and camels, "they are always willing after the first kiss—at least where my father's only son is concerned."

He lifted a half-empty brandy bottle wrapped in moist rags to keep it cool. He took a tumbler, wiped out the inside with a grimy thumb, filled it to the brim, tossed down the drink with a jaunty movement of his arm—oh, yes, politely drinking first, so as to prove to his guest that the liquor contained no poison; then handing bottle and glass to Theodore Roosevelt Brown.

The latter, earlier in the day, had watched the arrival of the Amhara nobleman and his mercenaries from a grove of tamarind and ebony trees where he and Jim had stopped. Knowing the *zabanias* of old, he had joined then, strolling amongst them with a heavy swagger, replying to jest with saltier jest and to insult with grosser insult. A man, they decided, after their own hearts: reckless and raffish and brawling. Therefore they had made him welcome, had pressed food and drink upon him; and here he was now, squatting on the ground by the side of Hassan Ali, the bottle passing rapidly from hand to hand.

The Somali hiccoughed loudly.

"Very soon," he declared, "you and I shall be pleasantly drunk. Then—*insh'allah!*—we shall call on the headman of this village. An ancient and unbeautiful he-goat, but he has two handsome daughters. Girls, as wondrous as the moon on the fourteenth day! Girls whose black locks are female snakes—whose mouths are like a crimson sword wound! Full-breasted girls for strong-thewed men—for you and me, by the same token! You, O my brother, can have the older one—and I the younger."

AGAIN he hiccoughed; seemed to be deeply thinking; went on:

"No—by my honor! The younger is yours, because I love you, O soul of my soul!"

He leaned over, embraced Brown. But a few seconds later, all at once, ferociously, he changed his mind. He leaped to his feet. He stood there, swaying.

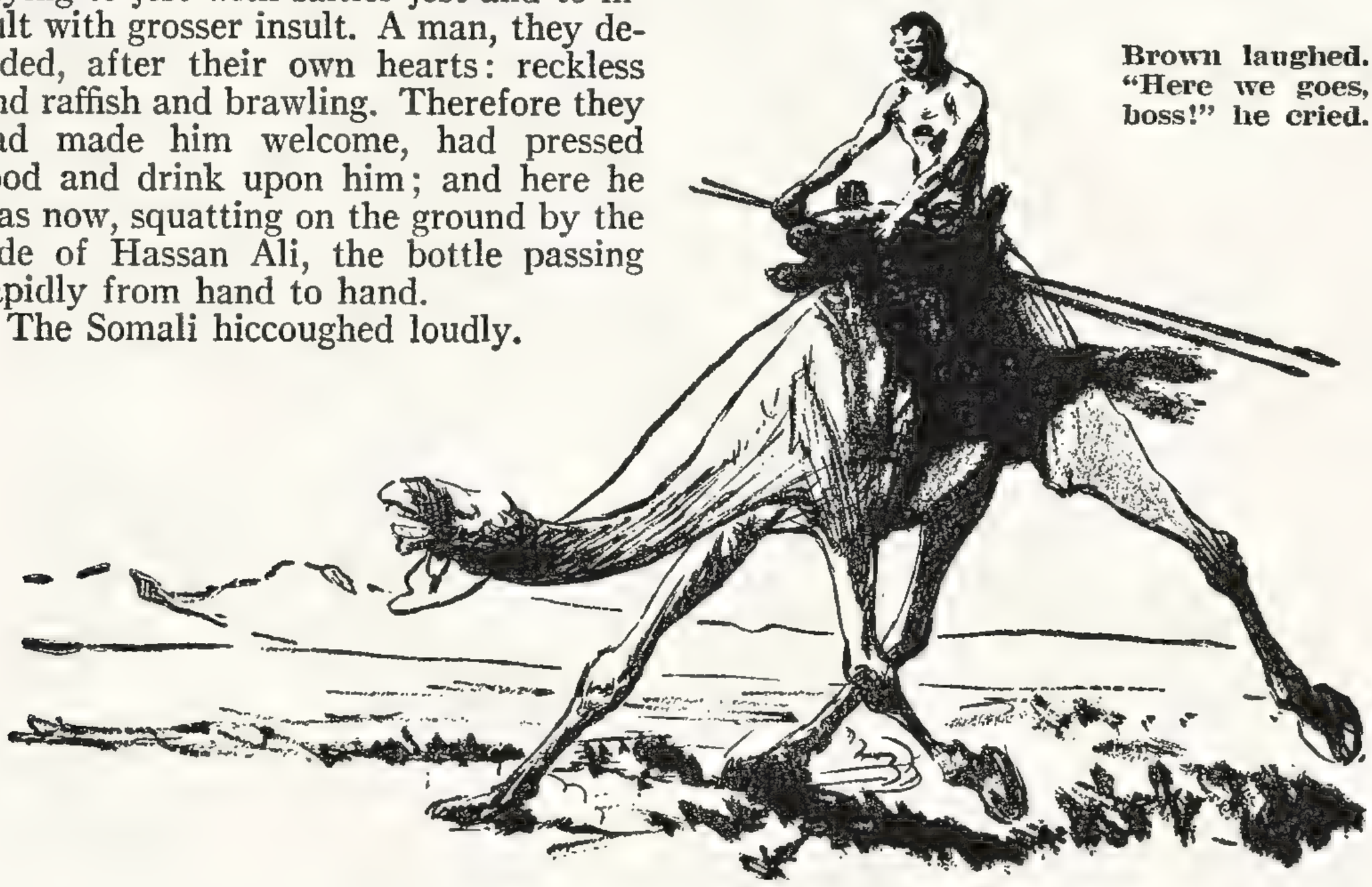
"And why," he roared, glaring at the American, "should you have the younger girl, O seller of tripe? *Wah, wah*—out with your dagger, O eater of filth—and I shall fight you for her.'

An idea came to Brown.

"Wait!" he exclaimed. "Should two warriors, who love each other, draw steel for the sake of mere woman?"

"But, how else can we decide who—"

"Look!" interrupted the other. He pointed to where the *ras*' camels were couched in a row, their halters running upon ropes stretched between iron pins, their broad leathery lips moving side-



Brown laughed. "Here we goes, boss!" he cried.

wise as they chewed great clots of boiled pulse and long, withered strips of knot-grass. "Let us race! Let whoever reaches the village first—"

"A noble thought, O most elegant beard!" was the enthusiastic response.

So, while Hassan Ali finished the brandy, Brown picked out two camels: thoroughbred Sudanese *theluls*, dun-colored, lean and tall of limb, massive of chest, with a profusion of dark-blue ribbons ornamenting their tails to ward off evil spirits. He saddled both, mounted one, held the second by the long plaited and tasseled rawhide reins.

"Ready?"

"Yes," roared the Somali.

He smashed the bottle against a rock, and stumbling and staggering, he approached. He was about to climb into the saddle. But just then Brown's right foot jerked out, sudden and hard, catching him square in the chest with the strength and violence of a mule's kick. He fell—was asleep and snoring almost before he hit the earth, while the negro was off at a thunderous gallop, leading the second camel.

There was little danger of pursuit, with the *zabanias* too busy attending to their own riotous affairs. Still—"Let's git under way," Brown told Jim when he reached the grove.

He jumped down. A minute or two later he initiated the other in the art of mounting a camel; and never, to his dying day, did Jim forget the first sensation—with himself in the saddle, and the camel grunting pessimistically through its large-pored Hebraic nose, kneeling on the ground, its gawky legs folded under its belly like jack-knives. With Brown's shouts in guttural Somali, since he insisted it was the only language which these animals understood: "Get up, *yah bint*—O daughter! Get up! Ah! Rise and begone, O grandmother of a bad smell, O ignoble wine-bibber!" And applications of the whip—more yells and imprecations—until at last the beast, after an unsuccessful attempt to bite Jim in the arm, rose suddenly on its long hind legs, nearly shooting him over its swan-like neck, then on its front legs, almost precipitating him across its wispy, ridiculous tail.

Brown laughed. "Here we goes, boss!" he cried, vaulting lithely up to the saddle of his own camel.

The tremendously dramatic climax of this memorable novel will appear in our forthcoming December issue.

Get in

Illustrated by Monte Crews

Sergeant Henry Linton dumped the mail-pouch upon the counter in one wall of the cubicle that housed the top sergeant, and watched with interest while Max Payton, the occupant of the cage, ran through the letters with practiced hands and eyes.

"This looks like part of it," declared Mr. Payton.

He produced a letter which bore the address:

"Captain Charles Field, Commanding Officer, Black Horse Troop, New York State Police."

Then he pulled out a similar envelope with the address:

"Lieutenant Edward David."

"Hum," was the only comment from Mr. Linton, as he noted the same return address on both envelopes:

"American College of Heraldry, Inc."

While both gentlemen appeared in doubt regarding the next step, the arrival of Lieutenant James Crosby provided an interruption.

There, Troopers!

This story of Tiny David and the State Police all begins in good clean fun—but it ends in powder smoke.

By

ROBERT R. MILL

"Any mail for me?" asked Mr. Crosby. His roving glance came to rest upon the two letters. "What is this foolishness?" he added.

"This is not foolishness, Lieutenant," protested Mr. Linton, who managed to get several drops of acid sarcasm in the title. "This is data on the family trees of the Field and David families. Long and noble lines, and all that sort of thing."

Mr. Crosby lighted a cigarette, and leaned upon the counter.

"What is it all about, Linny?" he demanded.

"About a week ago," Mr. Linton explained, "two dames got into a scrap, and wanted to swear out a warrant for each other. Our investigation showed that the trouble started over family trees. Sort of a 'my family is better than your family' affair. Both dames had sent two dollars to this gyp outfit, and the argument was based upon the results obtained."

Mr. Linton paused to refresh himself with a cigarette.

"But where do the Skipper and Tiny David fit into the picture?" asked Mr. Crosby.

"That's easy," declared Mr. Linton. "Next to eating, the Skipper and Tiny like an argument. They were about out of material, and this came along as a Godsend. They started that night."

Mr. Linton warmed up to his task:

"It appeared that the Davids were an old Virginia family. You got a whiff of old colonial plantation houses, faithful slaves and mammy songs as Tiny talked. Then the Skipper went to bat, and you learned—you had to learn if you were within a block—that the Fields were among the early settlers of New York. You gathered that the men of the family laid out what now is Wall Street, and their womenfolks always panicked them when they swept into the family pew in Old Trinity. This went on for hours, and any impartial listener would call it a draw—or a pain in the neck.

"The next step," continued Mr. Linton, "was what were intended to be kidding references to this outfit that looks up your family tree for two bucks. The Skipper allowed they would establish his claims. Tiny comes back fast with the crack that the Skipper is afraid of any investigation, which is bound to show that the Fields arrived in this country via the good ship *Cunard Steerage.*"

"I see," Mr. Crosby asserted. "Then they both sent in their two bucks. But

tell me, are they serious about this fool thing?"

Mr. Linton pondered.

"Yes, and no," he decided. "They pretend that they know the whole thing is a big fake, that it is a big joke, and that the only reason each one is going through with it is because he wants to show up the other. But if you ask me, I would say that they have argued so loud and long that they are beginning to believe their own bunk, and want to see it backed up. At that, it is a relief after that communist argument. The Old Man pretended to be pro-Red so long that he began to believe in it."

Mr. Crosby nodded.

"Just about on a par with the two dames," was his verdict.

"Worse," declared Mr. Payton. "They should know better."

Mr. Crosby sighed with gentle resignation.

"Glad you called the matter to my attention." His manner was official. "I'll have to take steps."

BEHIND his back, Messrs. Payton and Linton exchanged glances of dismay. Mr. Crosby ignored them as he picked up the envelopes and made his way toward the kitchen, with Messrs. Payton and Linton following in his wake. All this, Mr. Crosby's manner indicated, was very painful. At the same time, the two men following him gathered, there was a duty to be performed, and Mr. Crosby did not intend to shirk it.

Once inside the kitchen, Mr. Crosby opened fire on the cook, a Filipino boy of recent importation.

"Hey, One-Lung. Catchum teakettle."

The boy regarded him calmly.

"You wantum tea?"

"No tea," ruled Mr. Crosby. "Kettle."

The cook waved a hand toward the stove.

Mr. Crosby went into action. He removed the lids from the stove, poked the fire furiously and placed the kettle upon the glowing coals. Soon a cloud of steam poured from the spout of the kettle. The two letters were waved about in that steam. Then they were carefully opened, without damage to the flaps.

"There is a Federal law covering this," Mr. Crosby admitted, "but what is a mere law when the whole future, and past, of two loved ones is at stake?"

"Never mind the future," Mr. Payton directed impatiently. "What about their dirty pasts?"

Mr. Crosby frowned upon Mr. Payton. He unfolded one letter and began to read, silently.

"What's the dope?" demanded Mr. Linton.

"Hum." Mr. Crosby put the letter aside. "According to this, the Fields are an old family. They have established the fact that a Field sailed on the first voyage of the *Half Moon*. Probably mean they found a Field leaning against the bar in the Half Moon Hotel in Coney Island. But let that pass. The scene then is shifted to the Netherlands. We go back for three centuries, but it appears that is as far as two bucks can take us. Now, if the sucker would care to send ten dollars for a complete and more extensive search—"

"And what about Tiny?" asked Mr. Payton.

Mr. Crosby turned his attention to the second letter.

"Hum. I was afraid of this. Yes sah, here we have the Davids fighting valiantly for the lost cause in what we Southern gentlemen always refer to as the War of the States. We take them back to early days in Virginia, when a few pounds of tobacco would get a gentleman a stout handsome wench to wed. Real aristocrats, these old Virginians. Hum."

Mr. Crosby turned a page.

"Now we are back in Merrie England. We stop just one generation ahead of William the Conqueror. But what can you expect for two dollars? Now, if the sucker would care to send ten dollars for a more—"

Mr. Linton, who had been exploring the envelopes, provided a diversion. He hauled forth two sheets of rice-paper, and began to unfold them.

"This is the pay-off," he declared. "Both families have a coat of arms."

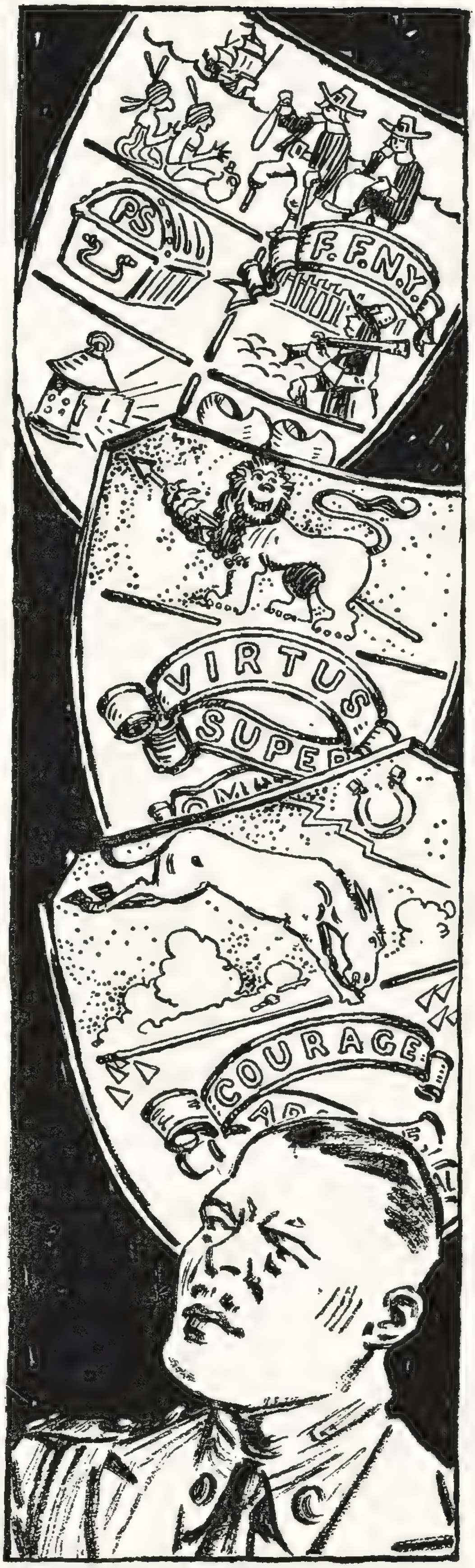
THEY bent over two penciled sketches. One shield bore the head of a lion and a spear.

There was an inscription in Latin, which the artist had obligingly translated as, *"Courage above all."* The second shield was embellished with a dog and a cross. The inscription was, *"We serve faithfully."*

"Which is which?" asked Mr. Payton. "Don't get 'em mixed."

"What's the difference?" demanded Mr. Linton.

"The Skipper gets the lion," declared Mr. Crosby, "and Tiny draws the dog." He glanced through some typewritten



matter. "A handsomely embossed copy of this crest, suitable for framing, is available at the reasonable price of fifteen dollars. A trifling stipend makes stationery bearing the device available."

Mr. Linton sighed deeply.

"Ten dollars says we will be looking at those things on the living-room wall," he predicted.

"Another five says we will be getting notes on that paper from both of them," declared Mr. Payton.

Mr. Crosby brushed both prophecies aside, and turned to the cook.

"Hey, One-Lung. Go catchum Sergeant King."

IN due time Sergeant John King joined the group in the kitchen. Mr. King, in addition to his other virtues, prided himself upon his ability as an artist.

Mr. Crosby wasted no time. "Can you draw the head of a jackass?" he asked.

Mr. King was equal to the occasion. "Sure. Got time to pose now?"

Mr. Crosby ignored the thrust. He produced the Field coat of arms.

"Rub out that lion," he directed, "and put in the jackass."

Mr. King showed no inclination to go to work.

"What are you waiting for?" demanded Mr. Crosby.

"To find out who is going to take the rap for this," said Mr. King calmly. "Most of your humor backfires."

"This," said Mr. Crosby with heavy dignity, "is a public service."

"In that case," declared Mr. King, "extra precautions are necessary. Am I doing this under orders, Lieutenant?"

Mr. Crosby hesitated for just a moment. "It is an order," he agreed.

Thereupon, Mr. King went to work. The result was pronounced more than satisfactory by all parties present. Then they turned their attention to the David coat of arms. By this time, Mr. King had sufficiently entered into the spirit of the occasion to make a suggestion:

"That is a greyhound. Be easy to change him into a mangy-looking cur, chasing his own tail. What do you say, Doctor?"

Dr. Crosby voted in the affirmative. Again the finished product exceeded expectations.

After that, the envelopes were filled and sealed. The conspirators scattered. Mr. Linton, in whose fertile mind additional activity was brewing, asked for, and obtained, permission to visit the village. Then Sergeant Payton, unsmiling and dignified, distributed the mail. . . .

Supper, that night, was marked by a state of armed truce. Captain Field, apparently preoccupied, sat at the head of the commissioned officers' table. Tiny David, seated on his right, seemed to be indulging in secret mirth. There was a smile on his broad face. He attacked his food with relish, and kept up a running fire of purposeless conversation.

Captain Field, on the other hand, contented himself with the bare necessary answers. Lieutenant Crosby, the third occupant of the table, felt more than uneasy. The silence was ominous. Mr. Crosby failed to find any comfort in Captain Field's face or manner. Mr. David's attitude only increased his alarm. Past experience had taught him Tiny David was not to be trifled with. With Captain Field and Mr. David allied in a common cause, Mr. Crosby shuddered inwardly as he imagined the results.

Sergeant Payton, sitting at the head of a neighboring table, did nothing to add to Mr. Crosby's comfort. Mr. Payton delivered a monologue that had to do with birth, breeding, family and station in life. He placed a Payton on the *Mayflower*, and outlined briefly the Payton influence on the New England colonies. He had reached the Revolution, when Mr. Linton arrived, tardy and out of breath.

"Supper," said Captain Field, "is served at six."

"Yes sir?" said Mr. Linton doubtfully.

"It is now six-twenty."

"Yes sir."

"Supper is no longer being served."

"Yes sir," said Mr. Linton, reaching for a handy glass of milk, with complete disregard for its ownership. "I'll just have—"

"Ten days in the stables, and no supper," declared Captain Field.

MR. LINTON retired in bad order. In the living-room he selected the most comfortable chair and awaited developments. He had a growing conviction that things were not as well as they had been. That conviction was strengthened when one Mr. Porter, ten minutes later than Mr. Linton had been, entered the dining-room—and remained.

"Is that justice?" Mr. Linton asked Mr. Linton; and Mr. Linton was unable to reply. Whereupon Mr. Linton made a mental note to the effect that Mr. Porter was very eligible to serve as a target for

some future attack. For the present, however, all parties were more than occupied.

When beef had yielded to bread pudding, and bread pudding, in turn, was only a memory, the double doors leading to the living-room were thrown open. Mr. Crosby, who was in the van of the rush, made the discovery.

"Hum. What's this?"

HITCHED to a chair-leg by a length of clothes-line, was an animal which close examination revealed as a dog. In size and appearance, this dog was not unlike a calf. The shoulders might have belonged to a collie, while the after part of the animal beggared description. The face, at the moment, was marked by an expression that denoted anything rather than intelligence.

Mr. Crosby's attention, however, was focused upon a blue blanket which was fastened to the animal's back with a strap. Embroidered upon that blanket was a shield. The shield was adorned with the figure of a dog and a cross. Above the shield, golden threads had been used to spell out a motto. Mr. Crosby bent over, and apparently read the inscription with interest. Then he straightened, and faced his eager audience.

"The inscription is in Latin," he explained. "You wouldn't understand it, but it means, *'We serve faithfully.'*"

Mr. Crosby's face lighted up with interest as he continued:

"Most interesting hobby, heraldry. If I am not mistaken, this is the coat of arms of the David family."

Mr. Crosby ignored the laughter as he turned his attention to the dog. He surveyed the animal from all angles, his excitement mounting as the operation continued.

"It can't be!" A glance from another angle. "It must be!" More close examination. "Most extraordinary!"

Again Mr. Crosby turned to his eager listeners:

"This is what is known as a Davidhound. Very rare. Bred exclusively by the David family." He indicated the blanket. "You will note that the dog appears on the family crest. The Davids have had them for generation after generation. We have definite knowledge that these dogs were in existence almost at the time of William the Conqueror; if anyone is interested enough to put up ten bucks, I have no doubt we can—"

Mr. Crosby paused. The huge form of Tiny David appeared before him. Behind Mr. David stood Captain Field.

Tiny David was grinning as he dropped to his knees beside the dog. The animal, confused by the noise and the crowd of strangers, saw before him a creature with a body almost as oversized as his own. Eager to make friends, the dog wagged his tail and offered one paw. Tiny David accepted it, and shook it warmly.

"Glad to see you, sir." He patted the massive head. "Nice manners—breeding. Even the dogs of the David family have it." He appealed to Captain Field. "Never find those qualities among the Crosbys or the Lintons, do you, sir?"

Captain Field reserved decision.

"Or the Paytons, or the Kings," added Tiny David. He untied the dog. "Come along, old son. We will go for a walk."

Tiny David thought rapidly as he led the dog toward the rear of the barracks. This explained Mr. Linton's tardiness at supper. The blanket was of course the work of Sue Moore, the current object of Mr. Linton's affections.

Mr. David decided that Miss Moore's name would go down in his little book.

The dog, of course, could come from only one place, the pound on the outskirts of the village. Tiny David chuckled to himself as he glanced at the animal, and admitted that Mr. Linton's selection could not be bettered.

The big trooper shrugged his shoulders. It would be a simple matter to load the dog in his car, and return him to the place he came from. At that, it had been a good joke. He had enjoyed it. Not that he would admit that to the gentlemen responsible for it; and not that he wouldn't repay the debt to the last farthing, and with interest.

"Come along, old son."

THEY passed the kitchen. The odor of good boiled beef carried to them. The excited chatter of the Filipino kitchen-boys was audible.

The dog halted. Ponderously he rose on his rear haunches. His front feet pawed in the air; then came to rest on the shoulders of Tiny David. The dog's face was on a level with the face of the trooper, and his liquid eyes gazed at his human companion with mute appeal.

"Hungry, old fellow?"

They retraced their steps and entered the kitchen. The cook needed no prompting.

"Him hungry?"

"Yes," said Tiny David.

They piled the plate high, and stood around while the dog finished it.

"Him eat good," declared the cook.

"Almost as much as Lieutenant Crosby," Tiny David asserted.

"No," the cook disagreed. "'Tenant Crosby eat more."

They headed toward the stables. The dog walked slowly, reluctantly. It was as though he sensed his visit was drawing to a close, and wished to prolong it as much as possible.

"Come along, old fellow."

Tiny David tugged on the rope. The dog planted his four feet firmly on the ground and balked. The trooper surrendered.

"All right, old son. You stay." He stroked the huge head. "Does that suit you?"

The dog's tail wagged furiously.

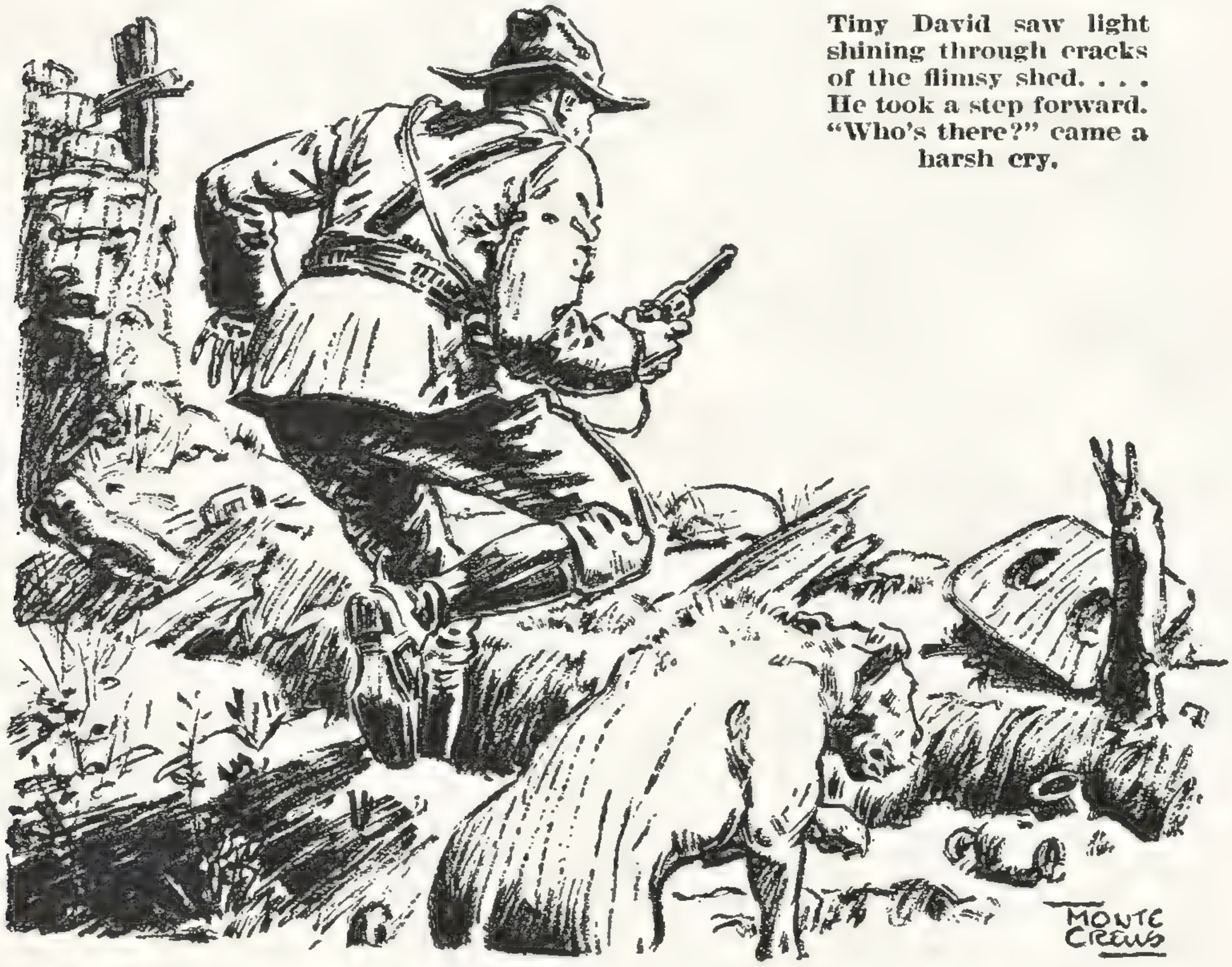
In the open door of the stables stood a much-chastened Mr. Linton, now installed as head of the night stable-watch.

"Shall I bed him down in an empty box-stall?" he asked.

"Yes," said Tiny David. "There are so many deadheads around here that one more will be no undue burden on the taxpayers."

Mr. Linton failed to find anything personal in that assertion.

"Aint it the truth?" he countered. Then he waxed confidential. "That dog sort of gets you. He is so darned awkward and ugly that you like him. I took a shine to him on the way up." Then came an afterthought: "Has he had his supper?" he inquired.



Tiny David saw light shining through cracks of the flimsy shed. . . . He took a step forward. "Who's there?" came a harsh cry.

"He had enough to eat," Tiny David asserted. "Don't give him any more."

Mr. Linton sighed wearily.

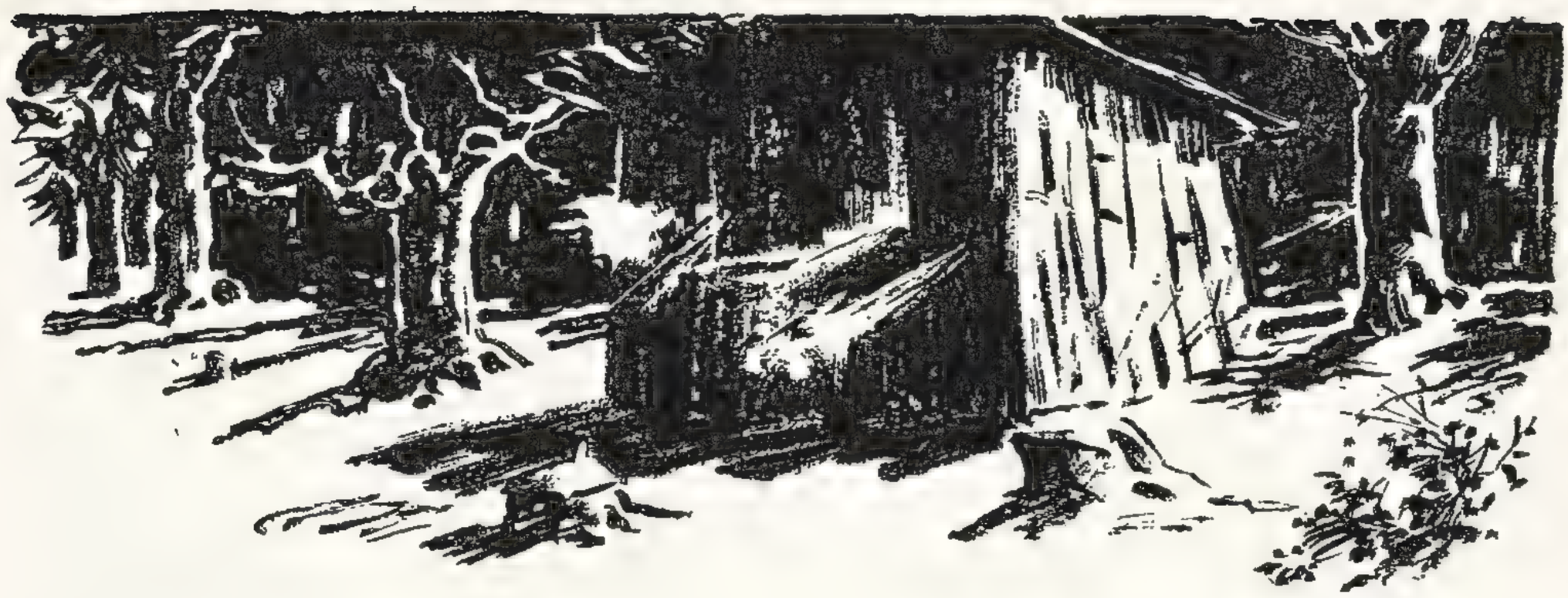
"In case he got fed, I was going to ask him to share with me. You don't happen to have a piece of pie in your pocket, do you?"

Mr. David did not. Mr. Linton sadly returned to his duties. . . .

The following morning it was apparent that the stable watch had not entirely wasted the night hours. Whatever the dog may have been called up to the present date, he now knew his name as Dave, answered to it, and gave every evidence, as far as a dog can, that it was satisfactory to him.

Tiny David, choking back his mirth, surrendered to the inevitable.

"It is all right with me," he declared. "Come on, Dave. We will get some breakfast."



As Captain Field peered from the window of his office, he was confronted with the sight of Dave on the kitchen porch, doing away with a breakfast suitable for three men.

"Is that monstrosity still here?" he demanded, ignoring the visual proof before him.

"Yes sir," said Tiny David.

"Get rid of him," ordered Captain Field.

Tiny David calmly returned Dave to the box-stall.

Two days later Captain Field went into action.

"Everybody else around here may be too soft-hearted to take that freak back to the pound, but I am not," he declared. "Here he goes."

The commanding officer departed for the stables; he returned in a suspiciously short time, and had no comments. From that day on, Dave had the run of the barracks. More than one visitor to the private office of Captain Field gave a gasp of surprise to see an animal, just a shade too small to be a cow, curled up on a rug before the desk. Captain Field always gave the same explanation, and he always saw that the door was closed before he gave it:

"He is ugly as hell, but he sort of grows on you."

Before many days Dave was firmly entrenched in the hearts of the men in the barracks. Mr. Linton, whose night duties in the stables gave him ample time, made the discovery.

"You know, Tiny, he can't be called a quick study, as we theatrical people say, but given time, he can learn almost anything. And once he gets it in his dome, it stays there."

Then Mr. Linton proceeded to demonstrate. He folded a newspaper, and placed it in the dog's mouth.

"Take it to Joe," he ordered.

The dog trotted off and placed the paper before the trooper named.

"Take it back to Linny," the trooper directed.

The dog obeyed.

Mr. Linton named another member of the watch, and Dave delivered the paper to him.

"You tip him off by pointing," Tiny David protested.

"I do not," declared Mr. Linton. "You try it."

Tiny David did try it. The dog delivered the paper to the person named.

Captain Field arrived in the doorway in time to witness the performance.

"More intelligence than most troopers," was his verdict. "Take a very little training to qualify him as a sergeant. Give him the rank, and he would have too much sense to throw it away by clowning."

Mr. Linton thought of at least two apt answers, but discretion caused him to leave them unspoken. He was getting very tired of the stables.

Dave trotted at their heels as Captain Field and Tiny David made their way to the garage. The dog hesitated as the two men entered different cars.

"Where are you going?" asked Captain Field.

"Inspection trip, sir. Be back about eight tonight."

Captain Field indicated the dog.

"You take him. Be company for you."

The open door was sufficient invitation, and Dave bounded in beside Tiny David.

THEY dined in Canaras Lake—Tiny David in the dining-room, Dave at the back door of the hotel; and twilight was just giving way to darkness as they started the fifty-mile drive for home. The dirt road through thick woods had been negotiated, and they were about three miles from the barracks when Tiny

David saw a light flashing among the trees some distance in from the highway.

The trooper chuckled as he halted the car and snapped off his lights.

"Jacking deer," he muttered, partly to himself and partly to the dog, as he jumped from the car and began to walk through the woods. The dog followed close at his heels.

TINY DAVID made his way forward with the steady, quiet tread of the woodsman. Gone was the awkwardness that characterized his moves in the barracks. Also missing was all the laziness that he affected in the presence of his superior officers.

Now the light was no longer visible. The moonlight, filtering through the trees, made it possible for the trooper to pick his way with care, and also to identify the section of ground he was passing over.

Dead ahead of him were the ruins of a cabin that had been destroyed by fire. Tiny David remembered the place well. Troopers had responded to a delayed call for help from there, but too late to save the small structure.

The rays of the moon had full entry to the clearing in which the hut had been built; they threw the ruins in bold relief. The occupants, seeking to keep out as much of the cold as possible, had built earthworks, not unlike trenches, around the lower part of the four walls. Those trenches, surrounding the gaping hole that had been the cellar, and a few charred timbers, were all that remained.

Behind what had been the house, and about one hundred feet in the deep woods, was another flimsily built structure which the family had used to store hides. Tiny David gave a start of surprise as he saw light shining through the cracks of this building, which he knew had not been occupied or used since the fire.

The light disappeared. Tiny David halted uncertainly, and reached for his gun. Maybe they were jackers, and again maybe they weren't. Both prudence and sound police practice prompted him to fall back and obtain aid before he tackled an unknown danger in lonely woods, far from human habitation. His natural courage caused him to dislike retreat, even though temporary. He felt the dog pressing against his legs as he stood there. The animal's head was pointed toward the storehouse, and he uttered a low growl.

"Quiet, Dave," Tiny David ordered.

He took a step forward.

"Who's there?"

The harsh cry came from the blackness ahead.

"Who are you?" countered Tiny David, and as he spoke he jumped to one side, and sought shelter behind a tree. A finger of light stabbed at the darkness; a sharp report sounded, and a bullet clipped through the foliage at the spot where the trooper had been standing.

Tiny David thought rapidly. There was a chance, just a feeble chance, that this unseen gunman was an honest citizen, who believed he was confronted with an intruder.

The trooper called out:

"State Police!" He used a bit of guile. "Be careful where you shoot. There are six of us."

A hoarse laugh greeted this bit of bluff.

"That goes for hooey!" came the cry from the darkness. "That cop's alone!"

Tiny David took a pot-shot at the owner of the voice, and smiled grimly as he heard a groan. Then the trooper backed toward the burned house. He gave way slowly, with his face ever toward the unseen menace.

All about him, shrouded by the darkness, he could hear men closing in.

A second voice sounded:

"Get that so-and-so! We're cooked, if we don't!"

The *rat-tat-tat* of a sub-machine-gun sounded, and a stream of bullets tore at the leaves and branches about the trooper. He fired once at the flash, and the gun was silent, but he heard the man carrying it move in closer.

Then he was at the far edge of the clearing in which the burned house was located, and Tiny David made a snap decision. These invisible enemies were closing in rapidly. They would get him long before he reached the road. The trenches about the small open cellar made a natural fort. It was so small one man would have some chance to defend it from all sides. The clearing, lighted by the moon, would make it possible for him to pick off at least two or three of them before they got to him. Sooner or later, of course, they would. But anything was better than death in the dark from foes it was impossible to see.

DUCKING his head, Tiny David sprinted for the cellar of the ruined house. The sub-machine-gun and several revolvers went into action. The trooper reached the far-side trench, vaulted over it, and gained the compara-

tive safety of the cellar. He crouched behind the trench, and fired at the spots in the woods where branches were snapping. The dog stood at his feet, growling fiercely.

Now there was a temporary lull. Tiny David reloaded his revolver hastily. He unbuckled his cartridge belt, and placed it within easy reach. Then he realized why the enemy was withholding fire.

The men in the darkness—there must be at least six of them—were surrounding the cellar. Once that was accomplished, they would close in. He would get some of them, but he couldn't wage a fight in four directions at once. Apparently these men were desperate—willing to suffer almost any loss, in order to eliminate him.

Tiny David stroked the head of the dog crouched by his side.

"The last stand of the David family, old son. Well, we are the last of a noble line."

A dozen mental pictures formed before his eyes as he stood there, straining his ears for any tell-tale sound that would warrant using a precious cartridge.

Care-free days on the road, riding the black horses out in search of high adventure. . . . Happy evenings around an open fire in the living-room of the barracks. . . . The men who wore the same uniform: all of them friends, but some of them dearer than others.

YES, he loved it all—even the bitter that came with the sweet, even the punishments, the canceled leaves, and the days in the stables. There were worse places than those stables. Linny was getting a dose of them. He would be on duty right now. Good old Linny! Be glad to trade him this open cellar, and what was gathering around it, for his stables. No, he wouldn't wish that on Linny, even if he could. He wouldn't pass this off on a dog.

A dog! That made him remember Dave. Tough! They would kill him too.

Tiny David glanced about in the darkness. A dog would be less conspicuous than a man. Right now, while the enemy was getting organized, it might be possible for Dave to get through. The dog knew the road. He had ridden over it often enough. The decent thing was to order him to go home. He might make it, and he might not, but at least he would have a gambling chance.

A big hand rubbed the shaggy head.

"Miss you, old son," growled Tiny David. "You are going to Linny, Dave." He pointed toward the road. "Dave, go to—" Then he choked off the command abruptly. Dave—going to Linny! Fierce hope surged in the heart of the trooper.

He pulled a pad of complaint-blanks and a pencil from his pocket. The light was dim, but it was possible to see. On both covers of the pad he wrote:

"Linny! For God's sake, look inside!"

The writing on the covers might become illegible; he must play safe.

ON the inside page, he described the location of the open cellar, and just what he was up against. He begged them to work fast, and outlined a plan whereby they could surround the section and bag the entire gang. Then he folded the page, so that one corner of it extended beyond the covers. That would be bound to attract attention.

Tiny David offered the pad to the dog, and Dave's teeth closed upon it. The dog stood looking up at him, almost as if he was waiting instructions. Once more Tiny David pointed toward the road.

"Dave, take it to Linny! Take it to Linny, Dave!"

The dog cleared the trench with one bound. He bolted across the moonlit clearing.

"Get that damn' dog!" came the cry from the woods.

Just as Tiny David fired at the sound, other revolvers went into action. The dog was on the fringe of the woods when he fell heavily, rolled, and was swallowed up in the darkness. A cry of triumph came from the gunmen. Tiny David, straining forward, saw an oblong, white spot on the dark grass. He knew only too well what that was: the white covers of the pad, which had fallen from Dave's mouth when he was hit.

Then Tiny David was very busy, for two of the men rushed the trench. The trooper drove them back. He was so engrossed that he failed to see a massive shaggy head thrust out from the darkness. Gleaming white teeth closed upon the pad. The head vanished. Then a huge ungainly animal loped off through the woods.

The dog's progress was not swift, because his left hind leg dragged straight behind him. He left a dark trail as he ran. But his strong teeth held the pad in a death-grip, and his stout heart beat steadily. He was obeying a command issued by a man he loved.

Tiny David fought on, bravely but without much hope. Three times they

rushed the trench, and three times he drove them back. Only the fact that his opponents failed to make use of their natural advantages, staved off the end.

These men were not woodsmen; that was obvious as the siege went on.

The trooper used a grimy hand to rub the sweat from his forehead.

"Damn' fools!" he growled. "All they have to do is climb a tree back there and rake this hole with their machine-gun."

He had given up all hope now, and he looked at it impersonally as a job of work that was being bungled. At times, as the minutes ticked on, he even wished they would get it over with. But he fought on mechanically.

Now the gunmen were calling to each other, and it was evident that differences of opinion had developed.

"Let's scram!" came one suggestion.

"And leave that louse to turn in an alarm!" scoffed another.

Then the voice of a third man, evidently the leader, ordered them all to close in for a rush at the cellar from all sides.

Tiny David balanced his gun in his hand, and gritted his teeth. It was coming now! He shrugged his massive shoulders. Let it. Damn them, it was long overdue! But a few of them wouldn't be alive to enjoy it.

The sub-machine gun went into action, and dirt began to fly from the trench. They had moved the gun much closer. It was at an angle that made it impossible for the trooper to return the fire without exposing himself.

"That's nice!" Tiny David muttered.

Dark figures rushed at the trenches from every side. Tiny David fired once, twice—

Then, as if by magic, the night became light as day as the rays from a dozen spotlights fell upon the scene. The rush halted. The firing ceased. The hoarse voice of Lieutenant Crosby sounded above the tumult:

"Get in there, troopers!"

GRAY-CLAD forms appeared. A lump formed in Tiny David's throat as he saw them, and watched Crosby, undergoing his baptism of fire as a commissioned officer, keep a good ten feet in front of his men.

They worked quickly and efficiently, the men in gray. One or two of the gunmen made the mistake of offering resistance. But the Black Horse Troop mopped up fast.

Soon, some handcuffed to prisoners, they were gathered about Tiny David and Jim Crosby, who were pummeling each other for sheer joy.

"You old so-and-so!" roared Mr. Crosby. "How are you?"

Then, without waiting for a reply:

"They pulled a pay-roll job at the lumber-mill in Deerville just before closing time, and holed in here. Nabbed all ten of 'em! One for the morgue, two for the hospital and seven for the jail-house. Sounds like a nursery jingle, doesn't it, you sorry remnant of a distinguished family! And how come you happened to hog this?"

Tiny David blocked a playful punch aimed at his jaw.

"Just luck," he admitted. "Saw a light in the trees, and went in looking for jackers." He jerked a thumb toward one edge of the woods. "Dave's over there." His voice broke. "They got him."

MR. CROSBY'S reply was inelegant but emphatic.

"The hell they did! What do you think brought us here, like the Marines in the third act?"

"But the note fell out of his mouth when he was hit," protested Tiny David. "I saw it."

"Maybe it did," Mr. Crosby admitted, "but old Dave picked it up. He had it when he broke in on the stable, dragging one leg and squirting blood, but going strong. Couple of the gang made a grab for it, but he wouldn't give it up until he dragged himself to Linny."

"How is he?" demanded Tiny David.

Mr. Crosby took time out to light a cigarette.

"Well, we left in a bit of a hurry. But even then the admiring populace was beginning to gather around him. Offhand, I would say his chief danger lies in being rotten spoiled."

A crooked grin crossed Tiny David's broad face.

"Not Dave!" he declared. "Look at the family tree behind him. He just lived up to the David motto, *'We serve faithfully.'* Have to send to that outfit and get him one of those handsomely embossed crests, suitable for framing."

Mr. Crosby produced his wallet, and counted out fifteen dollars.

"It's on me," he said. "Dave rates it."

Another of Robert Mill's colorful tales will be a feature of our next issue.

REAL EXPERIENCES

Truth may be fully as interesting as fiction even though it is not more strange. For this reason each month we print in this department the five best stories of Real Experience submitted by our readers. (For details of this contest, see page 3.) First a clergyman tells of the time he played the organ while a lunatic pressed a gun against his ribs.

He Played for His Life

By HUGH MANN

I MEET all kinds of people in my profession, for I am a minister. Among the most interesting are the group called transients by social service workers, and bums, hoboes, or tramps by the majority of people. Some years ago I was stationed in a small community which was not large enough to maintain a special institution to which vagabonds could be sent, and prevailed on me to deal with them. For eight years, men and boys of every description, and, on a few occasions, girls and women, came to me for assistance to continue on their way. My predecessor in the work, a retired merchant, had advised me to be hard-boiled, and offered me a revolver to keep handy. I had smiled to think a minister should ever require such weapons. . . .

One Friday morning a ring of the doorbell at my home interrupted the preparation of my Sunday sermon. My wife had gone out for the day, so I went to the door. A short, stout young man, with shell-rimmed glasses of very thick lenses, and a little dirty from travel, but not at all of bad appearance, was at the door.

"I want to talk to you about something important," he said. That was the way most of them began.

"What about?" I asked.

He replied: "I need help. I'm hungry, and I'd like something to eat, and maybe you'll help me get to Chicago." There was something of a sharp command in his voice, unlike the humble tone of most beggars. His eyes looked peculiar too.

"Well, my young fellow," I said, "come on in, and I'll give you a bite to eat, and see what else I can do for you."

He came in, and sat down at the kitchen table as I bade him, and soon was eating ravenously of the dishes of food my wife had left in the refrigerator for my lunch. When he had finished, I asked him a few questions, to which he answered readily. Then I told him I would have to wire to his home city for authorization to send him further on. This was the correct procedure in the case of every transient, since it usually resulted in getting them settled once more in their home communities. He readily gave me the necessary information to get in touch with the proper authorities, which was in marked contrast to the reluctance which most transients displayed in that regard. I suggested that he wait in the church, where I had to be in the afternoon, until an answer to my telegram should come, or that he return in about two hours. He decided to look about the town and to return later.

I sent the wire, then went over to the church study to work on some detail matters that required immediate attention. About three-quarters of an hour later I saw him at my open study door.

"It's raining," he said, "and I thought I'd come in here."

"Very well," I said. "You can sit in that room across the hall." I pointed to one of our meeting-rooms. "You'll find some magazines to read there."

AS I turned to my work, he betook himself to the room I had indicated, and sat down with a magazine. In a short while, however, I heard him moving around; and glancing over, noticed him staring at me with his odd bloodshot eyes. As soon as he noticed me

looking at him, he turned as if to look at a picture on the wall. I began my work again, but had a hard time getting much done, because this young tramp was on my mind. Soon he took a chair again, but began to make odd noises—squeaks, grunts, and repressed roars. I took it as his method of whiling away the time, but it annoyed me. Finally the telegram I was awaiting arrived. I opened it hurriedly, and read, to my astonishment:

HENRY MALBIN ESCAPED INMATE OF MALATRUSETT STATE HOSPITAL FOR CRIMINALLY INSANE DANGEROUS CALL POLICE.

I had the phone receiver off the hook, and was about to dial the police, when I felt cold steel pressed against my back.

"Leave the phone alone," said the harsh voice of my visitor.

TOO alarmed for speech, I put the receiver down. He reached for the telegram and read it.

"Yes, that telegram's correct," he said in a harsh and rasping voice. "I may be crazy, but I know what I want. You heard me singing in there." So he called those grunts and squeaks "singing!"

"Well, I was imitating a pipe organ. I have a hobby of collecting organ pipes, and I want twelve and one-half of the nicest, most beautiful golden pipes in your church organ. Twelve and one-half. Ha! The half-pipe's the one that does the trick. I'm going to be a real organist, see, and I'll make money blowing on them like Peter Pan. Peter Pan Malbin. Ha-ha." His laugh was insane. "Come on. Open up the organ loft, and I'll get to work. You go ahead of me, and if you do anything wrong, I'll shoot."

I realized that I had indeed a dangerous lunatic with whom to deal, but tried to change his purpose by saying: "You won't be able to play anything on those organ pipes when you do have them. You need a motor and keyboard. Let's sit down and talk it over, and maybe I'll let you play the organ right here in this beautiful church. Lay your gun down. I won't hurt you."

"Oh, no. I want those pipes. You don't know what a great inventor I am. I must blow them outside; and when I do, I'll bring the dead back to life, just like Gabriel. Take me into the church, or I'll kill you." And he shoved the gun harder into my back for emphasis.

Since no one was near to help me, I decided to take no chances. I led him to the organ loft, saying a silent prayer for safety as I entered the church. Up in the loft, he ordered me to stop; and with the gun held by one hand against my back, he reached up and pulled down one of the golden dummy pipes that decorated the organ.

"That's not an organ pipe," I said. "That's a dummy. The real pipes are inside, where you can't get at them."

"You're trying to fool me. I know better. These are the golden organ pipes that Gabriel Peter Pan Malbin is going to play." He had pulled down another one, several more, and seemed about to bring them all down upon our heads, when I said: "Wait a minute. I'll show you they're nothing but dummies. Let me play you a tune on the organ."

"All right," he said. "I'd like to hear a pretty piece on your organ before I take it all away. Sit down and play something, but remember I'm standing right behind you with a gun."

I sat down at the console with hopes that music might soothe this lunatic. I played a soft, peaceful little number, but still felt the gun held relentlessly against my back. Then I went into a march. It seemed to me that, at the louder parts, when the echoes reverberated throughout the auditorium and shook the building a little, the gun trembled a little too. I played another march, louder this time, and noticed the trembling of the gun even more than before.

"This fellow must be susceptible to loud organ music," I thought, and remembered having read once that some organist had frightened a congregation out of their wits by playing a powerful organ too loudly. Quickly I went into a more active march, and gradually opened up the power. Suddenly I utilized every control of the organ and played it in full volume; deafening noise shook the building from foundation to roof.

I FELT the gun shake violently, then heard it fall on the floor with a loud report as it was discharged upon falling. I turned around in a flash and picked it up. Looking at the lunatic, I saw him crouched on hands and knees, trembling violently, with perspiration rolling from his face, and eyes bulging with terror. He was mumbling incoherently.

I ran downstairs and out of the building, and soon had him in the hands of the police. . . . And now, if one of my congregation says our organist plays too loudly, I answer: "It's never too loud for me!"

The Colonel Gets the Raspberry

By ARTHUR HARE

DURING the World War in France, I found myself in a hospital center at Vichy. I was assigned to a hospital outfit, and told that if I made myself useful, I would not be classified "A"—which meant I would not have to go back to duty in the lines; and believe me, having once been there, I did not let any grass grow under my feet in making myself very useful here. My duties were those similar to that of the present-day ward-master in any hospital; I had to see that the bed patients were fed, supplied with whatever comforts were available, and generally assist the medical men in charge. I went on duty at six in the evening, had an assistant,—who by the way was a candy-maker in civil life,—and was relieved at six in the morning.

Coal for the stoves in the hospital was carried by each ward-master and his assistant to his respective ward; to get this coal, one had to pass the colonel's office, —also used for his living-quarters,— proceed to the basement, thence through the kitchen to the coal-dump, the process being reversed on the return trip.

It was on one of these return trips that my candy-maker assistant conceived the idea that coal in pails would be an ideal medium for hiding canned jam; and not being adverse to an idea which at the time seemed "colossal," I agreed heartily. So, passing through the kitchen, my assistant and I took unto ourselves four cans of raspberry jam; we proceeded to the coal dump, and carefully covered the jam, a can to a pail, with coal. With visions of a special repast in the wee sma' hours, we started back to our ward.

When passing the colonel's office, however, the door suddenly flew open, and out popped the colonel—who demanded to know what we were carrying, and upon being informed that it was coal, directed me to fill up his stove.

Brass hats, or whatever pet name you have for your officers, always seem to have an uncanny knack of doing the unexpected; there should be a law—

But I opened the stove,—from the top of course,—pushed down the unburned coal, and with great finesse and dispatch emptied my two buckets into the top of the stove, jam and all.

As the hours of night passed without further incident, we regained some of our composure; indeed my candy-maker friend was insisting that cans of jam just do not explode, when about three in the morning—*blooey!*

He was wrong: jam in cans, subjected to heat in a pot-bellied stove, does explode; and when the door of the stove is partly isinglass, that also must give way under sudden pressure.

ALMOST an hour it was, before they could recognize the colonel, in his pajamas. In fact, it is doubtful if any of those raspberries missed their mark in life, assuming that mark to be the colonel's pajamas.

The divine creator had blessed the colonel with a keen memory, and a deductive genius for getting to the bottom of matters; and of course, when it was determined by the adjutant that the colonel's pajamas were not covered with blood caused by a grenade in the stove, and that the sticky hot mass was really raspberries, the colonel's mind functioned perfectly, and I was reluctantly, oh, so reluctantly, produced.

For the first time in my life, smart as I think I am, I could not, for the life of me, think of any plausible reason why jam should be in the colonel's stove, much less in the coal I had put into his stove.

As a result of my slow thinking process, I spent the next sixty days doing kitchen-police; and while I am very fond of raspberries, I still have that guilty feeling whenever I pass a raspberry patch.

I sometimes hear from my candy-maker friend; and if he gets to read this, I know he will remember the time we gave the raspberry to the colonel.

My Life at Sea

A famous writer takes you to sea with him as an apprentice on an old-time clipper ship.

By BILL ADAMS

AT one end of a wooden bench, I sat before a fire, in the Sailor's Home in Liverpool, that evening before my first voyage. Outside, the night was dark, and rain drove by. At the other end of the bench sat another lad, rigged out as was I in the uniform of a sea apprentice. Eight bright brass buttons on a double-breasted blue serge suit. A blue cloth cap with a shiny leather peak; and the company's house flag above the peak, circled by gold braid.

Full of sailors the great room was. Tall men and short, broad and narrow, old and young, bearded and shaven. Tanned faces, and far-seeing seeming eyes. Stoop-shouldered a little, most of them. Some played billiards. Some stood in groups, talking. Some sang, gathered about a piano that a young man strummed merrily—a strange song, with wind in the words and slap of water—a rolling carefree chorus.

The door opened, and a lad with a laughing face entered. He also wore an apprentice's uniform; the buttons were tarnished, the braid of his cap faded. He came straight to me, and sat down.

"Going to sea?" he asked.

"Yes," I answered.

"Don't go. The sea's hell," he returned. "Go back home." I said nothing. He offered the casual information: "You call the carpenter *Chips* and the sailmaker *Sails*." Then he rose, winked at me, and added, "Got a date with my girl." And away he went.

The lad at the other end of the bench moved over to me. "Do you suppose it's as bad as he says?" he asked.

"I don't know," I replied. And soon I went up to my cubicle on the topmost of four galleries that encircled the large building. But all night I scarce slept. For all night there was the click of billiard-balls, the strumming of the piano, the singing. And always a murmur of voices. Names, endless names. Taltal, Anjer, Frisco, Rio—the Horn.

Next morning the owner of my ship looked at me from satirical eyes. I didn't like him. A pallid clerk set on the counter before me my apprentice indentures, whereby I was to bind myself to serve the owner for four years with no pay at all until expiration of the time. It read (as I now know:)

> *The said apprentice to furnish all sea bedding and wearing apparel, and faithfully to serve his said Master, his executors, administrators, and assigns; to obey his and their lawful commands, and keep his and their secrets; and not absent himself from their service without leave; nor frequent taverns nor ale houses unless upon their business; nor play unlawful games. In consideration whereof the said Master covenants to teach the said apprentice, or cause him to be taught, the business of a seaman and provide him with sufficient meat, drink, and lodging and medical and surgical assistance and to pay said apprentice the sum of thirty pounds.*

I took the pen, to sign my name. The owner said, "Better read your death-warrant before you sign it." His satirical voice roiled me. I signed it, unread.

"I'm going down to the ship. He can come with me," said the owner. Mr. Gilson, the young man who had found me this berth and helped me purchase my sea gear, wished me good luck. I followed my owner to the windy street. In a moment, turning a corner, I saw a forest of spars and masts above the warehouse rooms. The wind buffeted us.

"Going to be lively outside, if this keeps up," said my owner, speaking to himself. . . . Outside! Ah! Salt water! *Sailor, sailor, sailor!*

WE passed through a gate. Forty years are gone since that morning. But I see her still, just as then I saw her, her stern toward me, on it her name in golden lettering: *Silberhorn.*

Etching by Yngve Edward Soderberg

Her beauty smote me. Sky-pointing masts, low hull, wide tapering spars. Perfection of symmetry. And *mine*. Ah—salt water and ships at last!

(*"You'll find it a hard life, my son,"* my father had said. But I did not think of those words then.)

My owner led me along a rope-littered deck on which sails lay outspread. Riggers were aloft, getting her sails up, shouting to one another. Should ever I be able to learn *that* language! My owner led me to a small man amidships, and to him said:

"Think you can make a sailor out of this fellow, Mister Mate?"

The mate glanced at me uninterestedly, looked aloft and shouted to a rigger. My

owner turned and went. A rope falling from aloft dropped heavily on my head and shoulders, knocking my cap off and almost knocking me down. Another, running through a block, tangled my feet. I fell, and rose red-faced. The mate said: "You can come aboard tonight." I was relieved to go ashore.

IT was dark when I went aboard again, a porter carrying my sea-chest, I with my canvas sea-bag on my shoulder—in it my oilskins, sea-boots, blankets, tin plate, tin pannikin, tin knife and spoon. I entered a tiny alleyway whence on each side a door opened into a tiny room—the apprentices' half-deck, just behind the mainmast. Four lads each side; in each side just room for four narrow bunks, and four sea-chests set about a tiny table hinged to the outer bulkhead. I saw the black-haired lad who had asked: "Do you suppose it's as bad as he says?" I saw that other also, and he saw me.

"You damned fool! I told you to go back home!" he said, but spoke with a laugh in his eyes. Glynn Williams, his name was. He had been at sea a year. So had two others, Hickley and Barford. Thompson had served a year in a different ship. Taylor and Douglas had been for two years in a training-ship anchored in the Mersey. Only Wood, the black-haired lad, and I were quite green.

Having had no sleep the previous night, I was very tired. But they sat talking till midnight. Then I was asleep the moment my head touched my pillow. The straw mattress, the "donkey-breakfast" on which I lay was more comfortable than my feather bed at Peterstowe ever had been. . . . But in a minute I was awake again. Ten to five of a dark February morning, and my birthday. The watchman was lighting our lamp. He had set a large tin pot on the table. I dressed as did the others, in dungaree jumper and trousers, and drew my sea-boots on. No one drank any coffee. I tried to and could not. The pot looked as though it never had been washed. The coffee was bitter well-nigh as aloes.

"Turn to! Wash the decks down!" bawled a surly voice outside. I followed the others to the dim deck, my eyes heavy with sleep.

"Wot in hell d'ye think ye are? Get out o' the glad rags!" The second mate, speaking to Wood who had dressed in his nice new uniform. He crimsoned, and hurried back to change. Apprentice uniforms are for shore use only.

Three hours of passing heavy wooden buckets from hand to hand, the second mate taking them from the last passer and slapping the water on the deck. Four lads with long-handled brooms scrubbing. In less than half an hour my arms and shoulders ached. My palms were a mass of blisters from the wet rope handles of the buckets.

"Step along wi' them buckets!"—from the second mate. We stepped along.

At eight, breakfast. The same bitter coffee in the same dirty pot. And to eat, hardtack too flinty for even strong young teeth to break. One dipped it in the coffee. From eight forty-five till noon, hauling on grimy ropes, with hands on which the blisters were long ago broken. At noon, tough beef, ill-cooked, and soggy ill-cooked potatoes in their skins. From one till six, hauling on grimy ropes again for a purpose quite unknown, at least to Wood and me. At six, supper. The same dirty tin pot, with a thin brown drink. They said it was tea. Skilly, they called it. It had no flavor save of the dirty pot. Dry hash, made of dinner leavings, was edible. Williams said: "There'll be no hash when the old so-and-so is at sea."

I was about to roll into my bunk after supper when the mate looked in. "Shift ship!" he said calmly.

We moved the ship to the dock nearest the river, to be ready to go out at dawn. No machinery of any sort to help us, we eight lads, with the carpenter, and the two mates, dragged on great ropes till nigh midnight. The ship three hundred feet long, by some fifty wide, by twenty-three feet deep in the water. Three thousand tons of cargo in her holds. We were almost done when the crew came aboard. Singing, shouting, cursing, they rolled drunkenly into their quarters in the forecastle, a deck-house just behind the foremast.

At midnight, my bunk at last. And blowing the lamp out, Glynn Williams asked merrily: "Who wouldn't sell a farm and go to sea?"

And before dawn: "Turn to! Rise and shine! Shake a leg there! No time for coffee this morning."

Wind cried by. Chill rain drove. I mind a muddy river, and lights winking along its shadowy shores. Then a gray tossed sea. Ahead of the tall clipper, a tugboat with smoke pouring from her funnels. Once I saw, on the poop, a man of medium stature, dour-faced, thin-lipped; with eyes that seemed to say coldly one brief word: *"Obey!"*

"That's the damned Old Man," Glynn Williams told me. I'd seen my captain, the skipper.

It was nigh dark when MacDonald, the second mate, dragged from the sail-locker two stowaways. Far off, a light-house winked through the cold evening's scud. As MacDonald came from the locker, each hand clamped on the neck of a scared young landsman, the Old Man shouted: "Let go the tow-boat's line!"

The tug came as close as she dared in the tossed sea, maybe fifty or sixty feet from the ship's side. MacDonald tied a rope round a stowaway, hove its other end aboard the tug, shouted, "Haul in!" and lifted and dropped the screaming stowaway to the cold winter sea. The other struggled, too scared for any screaming. But in a minute the tugboat men were hauling him in too. The tug turned on her heel, tooted her whistle thrice in farewell, and was gone.

We were free, before us fourteen thousand miles of unfenced salt meadows. I'd forgotten Mr. O'Leary and Peterstowe long ago. All I knew was a great ache, and hunger also. And yet too, I was aware of something: aware of a strong majesty in my ship, throwing the sprays high, seeming to challenge the long in-rolling ocean swells. . . . No ragged robin now, no meadow sweet, no wood anemone, nor bluebell. But bronze bells clanging, sonorous across a sullen sea. And as a sail went threshing and flapping to its masthead, a deep voice singing: and a roar of windy voices coming in on the chorus of my first sea chantey:

And I give you fair warning before we belay,
Waye, aye, blow the man down!
And I give you fair warning before we belay,
Oh, give us some time to blow the man down!
Don't ever take heed of what pretty girls say,
Waye, aye, blow the man down!
Don't ever take heed of what pretty girls say,
Oh, give us some time to blow the man down!

And what next I recall is that I was standing at the foot of the poop ladder, on the quarterdeck, with one of the older lads when he cried: "God! Look out!" It was pitch dark by then. There was a roar of blasting wind, and a great sea crashed over the bulwarks, and from high aloft came a report like the crack of a cannon. A sail ripping, though I did not know it then. The older lad leaped up the ladder; but that sea caught me and swept me from my feet and to and fro; I clinging to a stanchion with both hands, water down my neck, my clothing all soaked, my sea-boots full of water.

I made my way up the ladder at last, and some one bumped into me, and a voice shouted: "Who is it?" I shouted my name, and the voice shouted back: "Stay where you are! Hold on!" The Old Man! And I clung there, in the pitch dark, with the ship rolling till I felt that she would roll right over and never come up. Now and then a half-heard cry in the utter darkness—and ever that continual savage roar.

At some time in the night one of the older lads was with me on the main deck, and we made our way through water that tore at our thighs. In the half-deck two feet of water swirled to and fro with each mad roll of the ship, and lapping up to my straw mattress, soaked it. But that didn't matter at all. I fell onto my mattress. Ah, *sleep!*

And next thing I remember is that it was day, and I was on the poop. The ship was rolling her rails under in quick succession, one after the other, her decks a rage of rushing white water. On each mast was one tiny sail only, and yet she was running like a stag with the hounds at its heels. And near her was another ship, and her masts hung in wreck, and she was flying a distress signal. And all we could do was to run on, leaving her to her doom. . . .

At some time in the morning the mist cleared, and right ahead of the ship was a fanged black coast, rocks reaching out to bid her welcome. Just time to turn away, only just time. Mates shouting; Old Man shouting. Weary sea-soaked sailors yelling at the ropes. And then she was running again with the wind-hounds at her heels. And that night lights winked ahead, and soon after midnight her anchors were down. . . . They still speak of that gale along those coasts. Eleven ships were lost that night.

WE were anchored in Barry Roads, off the Welsh coast. Fifty miles away was Peterstowe, where soon now spring would come marching with its daffodils and bluebells. But I rolled into my wet bunk and slept, till at ten to five came MacDonald bellowing at the half-deck door, "Wash the decks down! Step along!" So out we went, and found we

had to wash the decks down with no help from the crew. For the crew had mutinied. A sea had crashed into their forecastle and had smashed the door from its hinges. There wasn't a donkey-breakfast left in any bunk, nor a blanket, nor anywhere a tin plate left, nor a pannikin, nor a fork nor a spoon. Their clothes were gone. Everything was gone over the side to the sea. The forecastle was gutted. They'd slept on the bare hard planks of the forecastle deck that night, all soaked to the bone, and now they had rebelled.

Soon the Old Man came forward. "Come, men, what's all the fuss about? Get along now, and turn to!"

THEN one man, I mind, stepped out from the others; a giant of a man he was, with a bushy red beard, and a mop of wild red hair, and big glittering hard blue eyes. He faced the Old Man, looked him straight in the eyes, and he said: "Ye think *we'd* take yer bloody unlucky owld ship round the Horn, do ye? Ye think that, eh? By God, go on an' think wot ye please, Captain, an' no damned offense meant, by God! Yer ship is unlucky, an' she'll never get round the Horn, an' to hell with her! We'll touch no rope of her more, an' be damn' to her! Aye, we've had all we want o' *this* ship!" A murmur of approbation rose from the sullen-eyed men at the big man's back; and then the Old Man said:

"You've signed articles. It's duty or jail. Take your choice!"

And at that the big man cried loud, so that his deep voice rang the ship's length: "I'd sooner be six years in any jail than head south for the Horn in *your* ship, Captain! An' that goes for me mates too!" And he turned and looked at his scowling fellows, and from them again came a loud murmur of approbation. The Old Man turned and walked aft, and the men went back into their forecastle, and sat on its hard bare planks, leaned their wet backs against its cold iron bulkhead. Not so much as one pipe amongst the mob of them. Not a crumb of tobacco. Nothing. And in mid-morning a tugboat came off to the ship, and they went aboard her, and she took them and the Old Man ashore. We saw no more of them. . . . Six months in jail they got, for refusing duty; and we heard that that big red-bearded man on hearing that sentence passed, cried to the judge:

"Yer a damned fine man, Judge! Good luck to ye!"

Next morning letters came off, and parcels for some of us. I'd a parcel from Mrs. Hall of the Yew Tree Inn. A big round fruit-cake, and butter, and two loaves of Yew Tree bread, and a ham from a Peterstowe pig. Not a one of them had so fine a parcel as had I. . . .

For days we lay in Barry Roads, while stevedores took out damaged cargo and carpenters repaired the forecastle. One of the hatches had been smashed by a sea, and water had got into the hold. Riggers came off too, and sent down what few ragged remnants were left of her split sails, and sent up new in their places. And new sails came off, for the law said that a ship must have three full suits, and we'd lost almost one whole suit. We lads dragged the sails from the locker for the riggers, and we stowed the new sails in it, and when we were not at that we were kept busy polishing brasswork, and cleaning rust-spots from the bulwarks. Every night Glynn Williams and I kept anchor watch together. We'd sit on the rail and gaze shoreward where lights winked. One night Glynn found an extra pipe and gave it to me.

"You'd best be learning to smoke," he said. "A pipe'll damn' near save a chap's life sometimes."

There came a morning when a little breeze blew from the easterly—the first quite clear day since we anchored. And out there came from all the ports along the Bristol channel the many vessels that had run for shelter from the great storm. They came in a long line: ships, barques, brigs, brigantines, barkentines, topsail schooners, ketches—vessels of almost every European nation. Coasting vessels mostly, but here and there a tall deep-water-man. And when a deep-water-man passed us by, her crew would gather in her rigging and cheer us. "*Three cheers for the Silberhorn!*" And we lads would give her back her three cheers. Then she'd give us one cheer more, and be gone. . . . There are no mornings such as that today, for sailing-ships are gone; steamers have our sea.

By and by that lovely fleet was gone save for a few last loiterers. Right ahead of us was a lofty brig. The sun gleamed on her. She was a lovely thing, a seaward-sailing bird. We gathered in the bow, to watch her come, her people working hard to get her anchor over. Something was wrong. Before they could get her anchor over, she was upon us, broadside on. Our boom end struck her mainmast fair, and down it came with a long

splintering crash; snapped like a match, the sails upon it all tearing. And then our sharp bow struck her side, and cut deep into her. She might have been a cheese, so deep it cut, crushing her to below her water-line. And down she went, her people scrambling to our head rigging.

Afterward her skipper looked from our high forecastle head, to where she'd been, then turned to our Old Man. "She was all I had," he said. And our Old Man took his arm and led him to the cabin. A gray-headed captain, tears in his eyes.

Next day our new crew came off. I mind a few of them. There was a lanky Scot named Alexander; he was a chanteyman. There was a little stubby fellow with one eye; a hideous socket where the other should have been. Smith his name was—bald, with a big bushy gray mustache. He and the Scot were chums. There was a young lad named Erickson, from Helsingfors, who knew no English—a youth glad to find other youths aboard, he smiled at us apprentices a shy soft smile. There was a German lad named Furst. There were Billings and Thornton, old chums. And there was a giant Norwegian, Johansen. Others I have forgot. They came aboard toward evening, and lugged their sea-bags to the forecastle. Soon the mate came forward.

"Man the windlass! Heave the anchor in!" shouted the mate.

Tramp, tramp, tramp. Twenty-three pairs of sea-booted feet tramping round and round the windlass on the forecastle head. Ahead the tugboat lay, ready to take us out.

"Sing! Some one sing! Let's hear a sailor sing!" cried the mate. And Alexander sang:

Oh, where are you going to, my pretty maid?
And away, Rio!
Oh, where are you going to, my pretty maid?
And we're bound for the Rio Grande!
And away, Rio! Away Rio!
Oh, fare you well, my pretty young girl—
For we're bound for the Rio Grande!

Verse after verse, and all hands coming in on the chorus. Tramp, tramp, tramp, and the windlass pawls clinking, and the great chain cable clanking slowly in. A hum of wind in the rigging. And you could feel the eagerness of the ship! A bird, waiting to fly!

"Bully boys! Walk her up!"

In Amsterdam there dwelt a maid.
Mark well what I do say.
In Amsterdam there dwelt a maid,
And she was mistress of her trade
And we'll go no more a roving with you, fair maid!
A roving, a roving, oh, roving's been my ruin,
And we'll go no more a roving with you, fair maid!

The lights of Barry winking in the dusk. And fifty miles away was Peterstowe. Through Peterstowe's sere trees the wind that blew the tugboat's smoke was wailing. Good-by! Good-by to daffodil, to wood anemone, and bluebell, to thrush and blackbird singing! *Oh, sailor, sailor, sailor!*

And then the Old Man's voice, in tones impatient, sharp as a hammer's blows on metal: *"Loose the topsails!"* And shadowy forms swarmed up the shadowy rigging to shake her first wings free, and we were on our way. . . .

The next two weeks are but a hazy memory. There never was any sky, nor sun, nor star. The storm winds blew. Sweeping the long decks over, the wild seas roared. My feet were never dry, and always I was weary. Four hours on duty, four hours off; and never quite four hours' sleep at once. It takes a lot of getting used to. I mind a pitch-black night when we hauled on ropes by the foremast; clewing up the fore topgallantsail, a hundred and fifty feet or so high on the reeling night-hid mast. I mind the mate bumping into me, asking who I was, and saying: "Hop up and lend a hand with that sail!"

My first time off the deck; and as I climbed into the rigging, a spray lashed me, soaking me through. The wind howled. And presently I came to that wide platform round the lowermast head that's called the "top." You have to sway outward there, your head much farther from the mast than are your feet. Somehow in the darkness I made my way over the top, and started up the topmast's slenderer rigging. It swayed beneath my weight. The wind tore at me. Soon I came to the topgallant crosstrees, where again you swing outward, your head much farther from the mast than are your feet. I reached my hands up, clutched the rigging above the crosstrees, started to drag myself over them—and lost my footing. There I clung, and kicked, and kicked again; seeking a foothold. Eternally I clung, gasping, breath-

less, in the inky night. And then I found my feet, and started up again. And then a sailor's boot struck my mouth, so that I tasted blood. The men who'd gone aloft, old seasoned sailors, had furled the sail and were coming down. "Get t'ell out the way, damn ye!" from one. And from another: "It's one o' the blasted green apprentices. Get t'ell out the way, will ye, damn ye!" And somehow I swung my shuddering self out of their way, and down they went past me. And then, going down myself, I found descent worse than the climb had been.

I mind an afternoon of haze, but with a lot less wind now, and all sail set. Sudden, the mist thinned on a patch of sea near by. The sun broke out upon that few acres of rolling water. And there, shining in that little patch of sudden sunlight, rode a tall ship going the other way. And some one cried, "A homeward-bounder! Look!" And then, all in a tick, the haze rolled over that sun patch, and she was hid. A homeward-bounder, eh? And when should *I* come home?

And well I mind a day when no cloud was, and all the sea was blue. The wind was light. Some work was to be done upon a topsail yard, a hundred feet or so above the deck. Sailors were up there. And the mate said to me, "Hop up and lend a hand there, you, boy!" And up I went, my second time aloft.

Now I knew that night had been merciful. My head began to swim when I was scarce halfway up the lower rigging. And as I higher climbed, all things became a blur. I shook; I shivered. *Vertigo!* I somehow made my awkward way above the top. And there, with terror on me, I stopped, and did not dare look down. I felt that I must jump. There was an awful sense of down-drawing. And then I knew— *I was not fit to be a sailor!* And then there came a mocking voice, and looking up, I saw the sneering face of Thornton. "Get down," he said, "afore ye fall an' make a bloody mess on deck!" So I went *up*. And when I came to the topsail yard, no one noticed me. And I thanked God for that. I thought myself a coward. A coward, because I could not go high up without that vertigo.

I DON'T remember much how passed the days those first weeks. I mind the meal-times best. Hardtack for breakfast always, and bitter coffee. And on alternate days, at dinner-time, salt pork and split-pea soup; or boiled salt horse and bean soup. Never a change till Sunday came. For supper, hardtack and skilly. On Monday eve each man and boy was served a half pannikin of canned marmalade, and the same amount of sugar, to last till Monday next. For each four apprentices there was a bottle of vinegar. At noon each day a half-gill of lime-juice for everyone, to ward the scurvy away. On Sunday was our treat. That day we had the meat called Harriet Lane. It came in tall blue corrugated cans; stringy lean meat coiled down into the cans in stringy coils. It tasted something as a wet rope smells. In some ships it was known as Fanny Adams. Long ago there'd been two street women murdered in Sydney sailortown, and it was never known what became of their dead bodies. So rumor ran that they'd been canned for sailors. Tough girls they were, yet tasty to a sailor once a week.

AN evening came when all the wide bright sea was blue, with gentle whitecaps flashing in the sun's last light. Under full sail the ship pitched easily, to scend and pitch again at each long scend's soft ending. Gently she rolled, her lofty mastheads swaying. It was as though she danced, greeting the coming night. Her brass work flashed, and all her teakwood shone. And all the west was golden. And, golden lights slow fading, there came vermilion in the sunset sky, and lights of opaline, of topaz, of amethyst and ruby. And clear against that majesty of light set in the midst of the slow-darkening sea which slowly passed from azure to dim indigo, there stood a gemlike island, its outline soft against the many-tinted sky. Sailors and youthful apprentices, mates, carpenter, cook, sailmaker, steward and our Old Man, and his wife with him, stood gazing while sea and sky grew dim. The island vanished, merging in the night. The stars came out.

Clang—clang—clang—clang the ship's bronze bells crashed out. And from the forecastle head a sailor on lookout cried, music-voiced: "All's well, sir."

The mate replied: "All right."

And gathered on the hatch, beneath the stars, we sang:

Merry are we, merry are we,
There's no one on earth like a sailor at sea.

Mr. Adams will carry on his graphic story in our next issue.

Flight from Fever

He missed a firing-squad, but Yellow Jack caught up with him.

By JOHN D. EVANS

IT was during the month of August, 1920, that I was preparing to make a desperate escape from the city of Cartagena, Colombia, where men, women and children were falling like poisoned flies on the burning streets, from the dreaded plague, yellow fever.

Quarantine was a strict law in Cartagena. Whoever attempted to leave the city had to dodge bullets. Whoever chose to stay—well, yellow fever had already claimed three thousand of the fifty thousand inhabitants.

I had come to Colombia for the sole purpose of closing a business arrangement with some Colombian fruit-dealers. After finishing this transaction, I prepared for my journey back to the States. Then the staggering news came: Quarantine. Posters. To disobey the law of a quarantine means death!

The third of the plague was the hottest day that I had ever felt in my life. The temperature was 118 in the shade. Masses of human flesh and bones lying where they fell—on the dusty, hot streets, in the fly-swarming homes.

With the fever already slightly yellowing my skin, I could stand it no longer. At three o'clock I took a fast pinto from the corral and rode swiftly and desperately toward the Colombian border, my goal being Panama.

Finally, after three hours of continuous riding, I approached the border. Then a chill quivered through my flesh, and fear racked my feverish brain. Colombian soldiers stood in military formation along the border!

Now, too late, I realized my folly.

Dozens of soldiers came running toward me. They were upon me quickly, guns raised for action. One of the soldiers grabbed my horse's bridle. I slid off sheepishly, both hands raised in the air. They led me to their commanding officer, a captain. He stared at me angrily, and spoke gruffly in a mixture of Spanish and French; his long, twirled mustache quivered rapidly as he spoke.

"Dog of a peeg!" he boomed. Then he whirled about and sent a gloved hand flush on my cheek. The unexpected jolt caused me to spin about, and fall sidewise on the dirt road.

My assailant stood defiantly smacking his thin lips, and rubbing his right hand on the butt of the automatic suspended loosely from his side. I arose somewhat hesitantly. As I did, the captain drew the automatic, pressed it firmly against my ribs, then boomed: "Keeler! This weel be your feenish!"

"Killer?" I managed to mutter feebly. "I have not murdered anyone!"

He opened up his mouth in a loud mocking roar, and then looked at his men in a self-satisfied manner. "We shall have zee honor, to catch gringo, Frisco Charley. You are heem, who killed a Colombian soldier, eh?" And he brought his grinning face close to mine.

Immediately I took out my papers and credentials, and attempted to persuade the captain that I was not the person called Frisco Charley. But neither the captain nor his soldiers could read a word of English!

MY feverish head became dizzy, and a sickening tremor ran along my back as the soldiers got the signal from the captain to tie me up. I was to be shot—as near as I could make out, by the captain himself, who would be honored to do this little deed in memory of a dead comrade. I was led toward a large tree a few yards away. But I never reached it. I could see the tree only faintly; my brain felt as though a white-hot iron had pierced it, and every muscle in my body seemed to quiver as I slumped forward in the soldiers' firm grip. . . .

It was in a hospital in Cartagena that I learned that some other soldiers had captured this Frisco Charley, even while their comrades were dealing with me. His identification had been proved quite clearly when he attempted to shoot it out with the soldiers. He was killed. . . .

I was unsuccessful in trying to escape the yellow fever plague; but yellow fever had helped me in escaping a sure death before a captain's automatic.

A Lady and

The life-story of a famous animal-trainer, as told to Gertrude Orr—

SOME people are born with dancing feet, like Fred Astaire, and some with good hands that make jockeys. All I got from the grab-bag was animal sense—not horse sense, or I wouldn't be earning my living this way.

I remember the first circus I ever saw. I was a kid of eight in the little town of Princeton, Kentucky, where I grew up. I liked the clowns and trapeze-artists and the tight-rope walkers, but the menagerie and the dog-and-pony acts were the star attractions for me. And after the dog act I couldn't wait to get home. I thought I'd learned the secret of dog-training.

I tore upstairs, jerked the mattress off my bed and put it on the floor. Then I called my dogs, Lulu and Bum. In the circus the trainer had somersaulted his dogs from a spring-board to a pad. I tried to do likewise. Lulu was the first victim, and let out a howl that could be heard for miles as she fled. I wrestled with Bum to get him on my springboard. I was so busy I didn't hear footsteps. I looked up to see my mother standing over me. She'd been in town while father took me to the circus, and she hadn't taken time to remove her bonnet after she heard Lulu yelp.

"Mabel Stark, what in the world are you doing?" she gasped. Lulu had torn the feather pillow on which she landed, and scattered goose down until it looked as if Mother Carey's chickens had been molting all over the place.

"I'm practicing to be an animal-trainer, Mother," I explained uneasily. "I'm going to join the circus, and—"

But "circus" was enough for Mother. She had me by the ear and was yanking me down the stairs. She had an old cedar paddle, the kind they used down on the farm to mold butter; only Mother kept this one for molding me. By the time the afternoon's lesson was over, I decided it would be better not to mention circus again to Mother. . . . And I never did, for she and Father died two years later, and I was left to face the world.

I went to live with an aunt and uncle; they tried to be kind, but I was desperately lonely. My aunt refused to have dogs around, so Lulu and Bum were left at my former home. One afternoon I met our family physician. He saw me petting a stray dog.

"Why, Mabel, what is the matter? Are you sick?" he asked as he came up.

I tried to gulp back a flood of tears as I put my arm around the mongrel and shook my head. "Just lonesome, Doctor Dave! Nobody wants me around, and I can't even have a dog. I'm going to run away."

Doctor Dave stood smiling down at me. "How would you like a job?"

I looked up quickly. "What kind of a job?"

"Taking care of sick people."

I caught his hand. "I'd love it, Dr. Dave."

A WEEK later I went to St. Mary's Hospital at Louisville to start training. In time I earned my white uniform and funny little cap, and went to California for a rest and to get the smell of the operating-room out of my nose. The first night I was in Los Angeles I met C. J. Sands, manager of the Barnes circus.

He asked me how I liked Los Angeles, and I told him I hadn't seen the city, but the zoo was swell. He stared at me.

"How'd you like to join the circus?"

I knew then why I'd come to California. "On the level?" I asked, and could hardly hear my own voice.

He nodded. "We always sign on a few girls each spring to try out. I'm picking you on a hunch—and my hunches always work."

I held out my hand. "It's a deal!"

(No brass band met Mabel Stark when she arrived at the circus lot. Indeed, she spent her first year with the show, learning to ride a horse and in other rudimentary tasks, and appeared before the public only in the parade.)

Mr. Sands came up as I left the tent one day.

"Like the show?"

"I liked the lions. I'm going over to the menagerie tent and get acquainted

the Tigers

By MABEL STARK

with your tigers. I'd like to work them!"

"I'd like a million dollars, too. Cap needs another high school rider, so report to him in the morning. You needn't ride parade. You can go in with the regular show next week."

I stared after him as he walked away. Bert the animal-trainer came swaggering by. He grinned at me and saluted with his whip.

"I saw you watching me, Kentucky. Guess you liked the act all right. All the women do!"

"It's all right," I answered casually. "Wait till *I* break in those tigers."

"Ha ha! Hear the little wag! Why, my child, no woman works tigers. A few of them have tried to work lions or leopards after they are broken, but they all wind up in a pine box—like Madame Sonia."

I felt a little shiver run down my spine, but there was a look on his face that made me all the more determined.

"I'll bet you a hundred dollars I work those tigers next season," I bragged.

He jerked a roll of bills from his pocket and stuck them under my nose. "You're on, if you've got the dough."

"I—I've only fifty in cash."

"All right. Come around and see me when you've saved another fifty. I'll fix it with the boss for you to go into the tiger den—and give him your hundred to pay for the funeral."

One afternoon a man came in and sat down beside me. I moved over to make more room for him, and saw it was Mr. Barnes, the owner. He smiled at me.

"Think you'll join up again this year?"

"Yes sir," I answered boldly. "That is, if you'll give me an animal act."

He looked me over thoughtfully. "You're little. You'd look well in the ring with those big brutes. But I can't take the chance. Your people would sue me if you got killed."

"I haven't any people. I'm an orphan. And the tigers won't kill me. Nobody dies until their number is up. . . . And then nothing can help them."

He stared at me with an odd smile. Suddenly he got up and walked away.

I heard some one coming, and hurriedly dried my tears. Then I looked around. Sands was there with Sam, another of the circus employees, glowering at me from behind him.

"If you're serious about working those tigers, Mabel, you've got a job," said Sands quietly.

"Of course she's not serious," snapped Sam. "You crazy kid! You can't handle those killers! You're letting these birds talk you into signing your own death-warrant."

I glared. "You mind your own business. I told you I could run my own show. I know what I'm doing."

Sands was smiling. "Good girl! We'll fix up a release for you to sign tomorrow absolving the company—just in case anything should happen! If you make good, your act will be a feature." He turned to Sam. "And you take the kid's advice and hold your tongue. You can take her to the lawyer's office tomorrow to sign that release."

Bert had run his lions back into their cages and sauntered over to us. "What's all the row?"

"Still got that hundred you offered to bet me awhile ago?" I asked pertly.

"Yeah, and a coupla more to go with it."

"Well, I've only saved a century marker, but I'll have two tomorrow. The boss is signing me on to work the tigers."

Bert's expression was funny. Then he laughed from the side of his mouth. "I can hardly wait! Boy, what I can do with those extra berries!"

I SIGNED away my life and found I was to get fifty dollars a week for working those tigers—*if* I could work them. It seemed like a fortune to me.

Bert was coming from the animal barns when we got back from town. He strode back into the barns with me at his heels. "Hey, Red! Put the props back in the arena, the tiger cage," he called to the boss animal man. "This gal thinks she's a tiger-trainer."

Red shook his head slowly. "You can't let her go in with those devils, Bert. This joke's gone far enough."

"Boss' orders," snapped Bert. "She's just signed a release."

Red spread his hands and shrugged. "Well, in that case, guess we won't have to feed the animals tonight!"

Bert looked around at me and I tried to appear unconcerned. "You can't go in the cage with that dress thing on."

"Shall I put on my riding-suit?"

"What's the use of spoiling it? I'll loan you a pair of my overalls. The show would be over before it started if a tiger claw caught your skirt. They like to hear things tear, and once they start, they just keep right on. I want my money's worth of fun. Come on."

MY feet were lead but my head was so light I felt dizzy. As I followed him to the show arena, I kept telling myself that it didn't matter anyway.

"Props all ready," sang out Red from inside the steel cage.

"Then shift Toby, King and Queen." Bert thrust his whip into my hand. "Come on, tiger-trainer! Step inside there. Lock the door behind you." I stepped inside the cage and locked the door. "Open the chute, Red. Here come the tigers."

I crowded back against the bars, trying to make myself as small as possible. Would they leap on me as soon as they spotted me? I clutched the buggy-whip —all that I had to protect me if they attacked. Then I heard the rattle of steel. The chute door opened, and Toby came slinking out into the arena with a grunt and a snarl. King and Queen followed as Red gave them a prod through the bars of the runway. They began to pace around the arena. King dropped down and rolled over on his back like a big dog. Queen made a jump for the tip of his tail, and he sprang to his feet and slapped out at her.

"Playful little kitties!" Bert's voice from outside the arena sounded miles off. "Close that chute door." I edged over and closed the chute. "Don't let them know you're afraid. Speak to them."

I tried to speak, but my vocal cords were paralyzed. Finally I squeaked:

"Toby! Nice Toby!"

Toby raised her head, her green eyes glittering. She started slowly toward me. Involuntarily I pushed against the bars.

"Keep talking to her," warned Bert.

"Toby! Nice Toby!"

She stopped a few feet away from me and began to purr.

"Is—is she going to j-jump?" I whispered.

"She's trying to make friends," snapped Bert. "Don't let her come any closer, or she might spring. Crack your whip and tell her to go to her place."

I put all my strength into the snap of that whip. "Get up there, Toby." I took a step forward.

For a second Toby stood her ground, staring at me. Then she turned docilely and sprang up on a pedestal.

"Call King and Queen now."

I spoke their names, and Queen jumped into place, but King turned, snarling.

"Cut him on the nose with that whip, quick!" warned Bert.

I brought the whip down on King's nose. A monstrous claw shot out, which I side-stepped involuntarily. Again I brought the whip lash down on his nose. With a rumble of disgust he jumped onto the pedestal and turned around with a hiss.

"Good girl. Just let them sit there for a while."

I backed against the bars of the arena. My knees would scarcely hold me.

IT seemed like hours, though it was only two minutes, before Bert spoke again quietly:

"That's enough for today. Open the chute door and call their names."

I obeyed quickly. "Toby! Queen! King!"

Like a flash all three were down and fighting to get through the chute door and back to their cages. Once their backs were turned, I cracked my whip triumphantly and locked the chute. Somehow I managed to walk out of the arena.

Bert caught my hand and held it. "You're all right! The hundred is yours, and more power to you. I didn't think you had it in you."

They all crowded around me, laughing and exclaiming and congratulating me. But I was holding tight to Bert's arm. There was a look in his eyes as he smiled down at me that made my heart turn somersaults.

"Happy?" he asked as he pulled me out of the crowd.

I didn't walk, I danced—down the street.

I'd won a bet, and Bert was being kind. The circus family had opened up their hearts to me. I was a trouper now. I belonged!

A Momentous Day for America

The day of a national election is always a great day in the United States This year, 1936, it is even more important than it has been in the past Big issues will be decided by the election of Nov 3rd, 1936

No election since 1860 has had so great a bearing on the future course of this country, as will the election of 1936

In the national election of 1932, 43 out of every 100 of those who had the right to vote did not take the trouble to go to the polls

The responsibility for the result of the election this year rests squarely on the shoulders of every individual man and woman who has the right to vote—and if YOU are entitled to vote, be sure that you let no sacrifice of time or inconvenience keep you from registering and voting

Register! Vote!

This space is provided by The McCall Company because of its conviction that the real expression of democracy lies in a vote of **all** *the people.*

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It is a Lightness in the smoke that makes people choose Luckies. A rich, clean Lightness in the taste. A smooth Lightness of "feel" in the throat. Puff by puff, a delightful sense of ease. From the choosing of the finest center-leaf tobaccos—to the "Toasting" which removes certain harsh irritants naturally present in all tobacco, every careful measure of Lucky Strike's manufacture is designed to please you more . . . to offer A Light Smoke of rich, ripe-bodied tobacco.

Luckies—a light smoke

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